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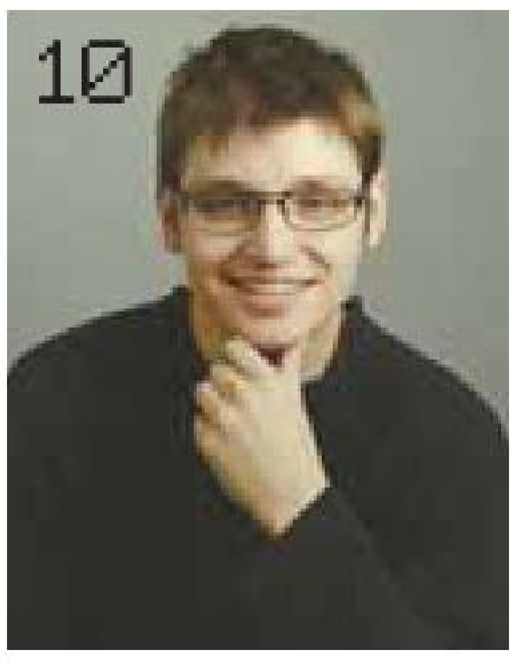

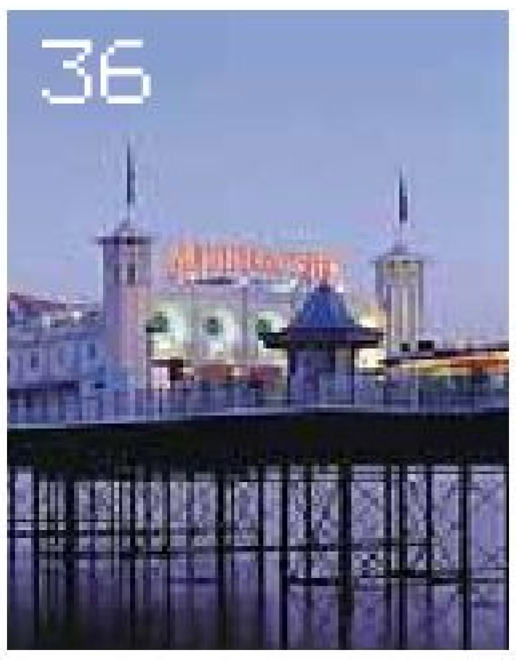

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Softimage reveals Incubator
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Power List: Our exclusive studio ranking
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We're listening, says Government

UK Treasury responds to call for tax breaks with promise of games industry collaboration – will next year's Budget offer an answer?

by Michael French

JUST WEEKS AFTER the launch of the Games Up campaign – a lobbying effort backed by Tiga and ELSPA and sponsored by 15 leading UK games studios – the UK Government's Treasury has told *Develop* that it will help 'collect and review' evidence supporting the call for a games industry tax subsidy.

Announced officially late last month, Games Up is masterminded by a steering committee of SCEE, Frontier, Games Investor Consulting, Tiga and ELSPA.

The effort is focused on targeted campaigns to Parliamentarians and the media which has started with articles placed in the mainstream press using a PR agency. The effort will continue throughout the year with a wider national media campaign and lobbying of constituency members of parliament plus a series of events set to take place both before and after the Government's summer recess.

The objective of the campaign is to educate the backbench MPs and policy makers about issues facing the games development sector when it comes to the state of the economy and education. Key messages include better collaboration between educators and industry, acknowledgment of the cultural and economic impact of the UK games industry, and – of course – pushing the Government to consider implementing a tax break for UK games firms.

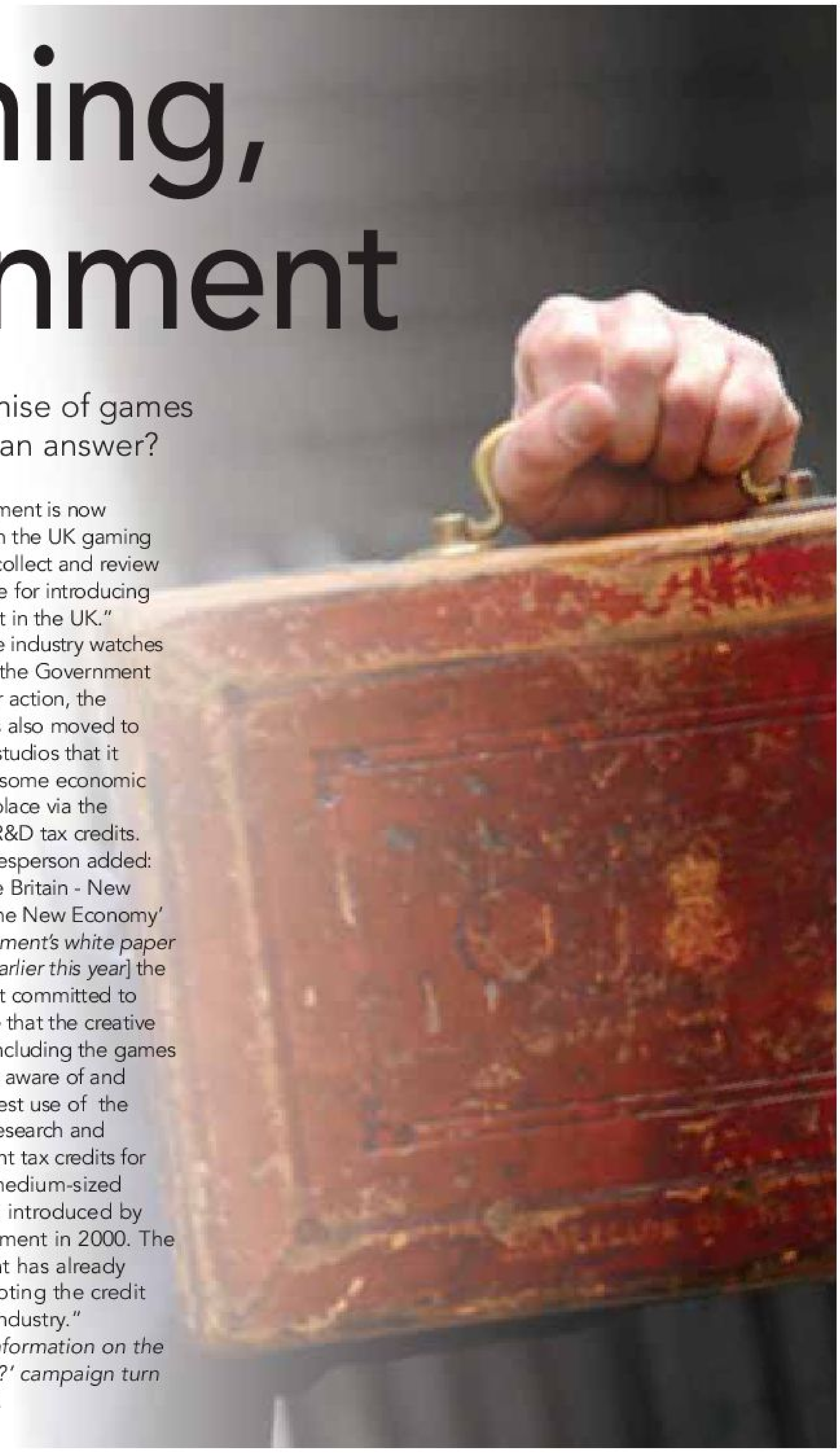
And in response the Treasury has already revealed it is keenly looking into the matter, saying it will work with the industry to review the campaign's cause.

A Treasury spokesperson told *Develop*: "The Government values the contribution of the UK's creative industries to the economy and to the UK's cultural richness. Any tax incentive must be supported by evidence, and following France's recent approval of a cultural tax relief for games, the Government is now working with the UK gaming industry to collect and review the evidence for introducing such a credit in the UK."

But as the industry watches on to see if the Government takes further action, the Treasury has also moved to remind UK studios that it already has some economic benefits in place via the 'generous' R&D tax credits.

The spokesperson added: "In 'Creative Britain - New talents for the New Economy' [*the Government's white paper published earlier this year*] the Government committed to making sure that the creative industries, including the games sector, were aware of and made the best use of the generous Research and Development tax credits for small and medium-sized enterprises, introduced by the Government in 2000. The Government has already been promoting the credit within the industry."

For more information on the 'Games Up?' campaign turn to page 40.



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Editorial

On the Up

Don't think the fact that the messages in this issue's cover, the story on the previous page, and the feature starting on page 40 contrast heavily with the list of greats listed to the right isn't lost on me.

Certainly, the irony that the same developers demanding Government support via Games Up are also those with multiple nominations in the new IP and best studio stakes was apparent to myself and my colleagues throughout the lobbying process for the Develop Awards.

The lobbying process this year was possibly the fiercest ever, with many competing for some of our most coveted awards.

Is it ill-fitting that those same studios would then turn to lobby Government and the media about issues that threaten an industry which is currently proving immune (in a retail sense, at least) to the world's economic pressures?

I don't think so – Games Up is focused on long-term protection of the industry, protection of the very kind of productions listed to the right; in fact it wants to create a healthier market so more games like that can be made.

Lara Croft godfather Ian Livingstone knows too well the pressures of international development – *Tomb Raider* is developed in the US these days, after all, and Eidos Montreal is growing while its UK sister studios shrink. Meanwhile fellow Games Up spokesperson David Braben's Frontier is riding a creative wave boosted by WiiWare.

Key Develop Award nominees like *Heavenly Sword* and *Grand Theft Auto IV* – with their expensive facial animation tricks and years of manpower-hungry production – are still the exception, not the rule. Games Up asks if we can ensure the UK produces these games by default. Whether it succeeds, well, we'll have to wait and see. But its mix of media and political lobbying has the right agenda.

In the meantime, we'll be honoring all those exceptional games (and more) at the awards in Brighton next month. See you there.

Michael French
michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

Michael.

Develop Awards

Industry gears up for big night at Develop Industry Excellence Awards

July 30th. That's the day the cream of European games development will convene on Brighton's Metropole Hotel for the Develop Awards.

As the list of finalists (*right*) details, the Awards acknowledge the best work in the sector, rewarding not just studios and their creative endeavours, but the work done by the publishers and service companies that support them.

Rockstar Games, Ninja Theory and Sony Computer Entertainment lead the charge, with five nominations each acknowledging a variety of things from the release of games such as *Grand Theft Auto IV*, *Heavenly Sword* and *SingStar* through to new technology and new studios (such as Rockstar London).

Other teams with multiple nominations include Criterion Games, Frontier Developments, Rebellion, and NaturalMotion.

European studios are out in force as well, with nominations for mobile team Konami Paris, Digital Chocolate Finland, Triumph, Progressive Media, CCP, Massive, Starbreeze, Crytek, Hansoft, Havok, and U-Trax.

New awards for 2008, meanwhile, seek to reward the under-exposed and under-appreciated areas of the development sector, with six different firms up for the new Games:Edu New Talent prize. The previous 'Services and Outsourcing' prize has also been split into two in order to better represent the more diverse range of companies in the Creative Outsourcing and Services fields.

A dedicated look at the finalists for the awards can be found in the supplement included with this issue.

The event takes place on Wednesday July 30th at the Hilton Metropole in Brighton, alongside the Develop Conference & Expo.

Seats and tables are already selling out, with over 400 industry professionals representing over 100 different companies set to attend.

To book your place, contact Jodie.Holdway@bhpr.co.uk.

Rockstar North's Grand Theft Auto IV (above) and Ninja Theory/SCEE Cambridge's Heavenly Sword (below) are two of the releases with the most nominations

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finalists named

as 68 different companies battle it out for coveted trade awards

DEVELOP AWARDS:
The Finalists

CATEGORY:
Creativity

Best New IP
LostWinds (Frontier Developments)
Heavenly Sword (Ninja Theory)
Crysis (Crytek)
World in Conflict (Massive)
Viking: Battle for Asgard (Creative Assembly)
Overlord (Triumph)

Best Use of a Licence
Ferrari Challenge (Eutechnyx)
The Darkness (Starbreeze)
Sega Superstar Tennis (Sumo Digital)
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars (Splash Damage)
Lego Indiana Jones (Travellers' Tales)
Metal Gear Solid Mobile (Ideaworks3D)

Visual Arts
Rockstar North (*Grand Theft Auto IV*)
Crytek (*Crysis*)
London Studio (*SingStar* PS3 UI)
Frontier Developments (*LostWinds*)
Criterion Games (*Burnout Paradise*)
Ninja Theory/SCEE Cambridge (*Heavenly Sword*)

Audio Accomplishment
London Studio (*SingStar* PS3)
Rockstar North (*Grand Theft Auto IV*)
Ninja Theory/SCEE Cambridge (*Heavenly Sword*)
Sumo Digital (*Sega Superstars Tennis*)
Codemasters Studios (*Race Driver GRID*)
Criterion Games (*Burnout Paradise*)

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Sega
LucasArts
Gamecock
1C & 505 Games

CATEGORY:
Technology and Services

Tools Provider
Hansoft
Epic Games
Sony & SN Systems
Havok
NaturalMotion
IDV

Technical Innovation
Rockstar North/NaturalMotion/Image Metrics (*Grand Theft Auto IV*)
Ninja Theory/SCEE Cambridge (*Heavenly Sword*)
Ideaworks3D (Airplay)
SCEE R&D Team (PhyreEngine)
Geomerics (Enlighten)

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Axis Animation
Side UK
Richard Jacques Studios
Outsource Media UK
The Audio Guys
Nimrod Productions

Services
Testronic Labs
Partnertrans UK
Babel Media
Audiomotion
U-Trax

Recruitment Company
Specialmove
Day One Search
Aardvark Swift
Amiqus
OPM

Games:Edu New Talent Award
Abertay University & Dare to be Digital
Rare
Microsoft
Blitz
University of Derby
Hull University

CATEGORY:
Studios

Best New UK/European Studio
Finblade
Konami Paris
Oxygen Studios
Rockstar London
Doublesix

Best Mobile Studio
Progressive Media
Ideaworks3D
Digital Chocolate Finland/Sumea
Distinctive Developments

Business Development
Zoë Mode
Rebellion
Realtime Worlds
Team 17
NaturalMotion

Best Independent Developer
Rebellion
Jagex
CCP
Frontier
Splash Damage
Ninja Theory

Best In-house Developer
Rockstar North
Codemasters Studios
Criterion Games
Sports Interactive
London Studio
Bizarre Creations

SPECIAL INDUSTRY RECOGNITION AWARDS

Development Legend

Grand Prix

Winners for these two awards to be announced on the night

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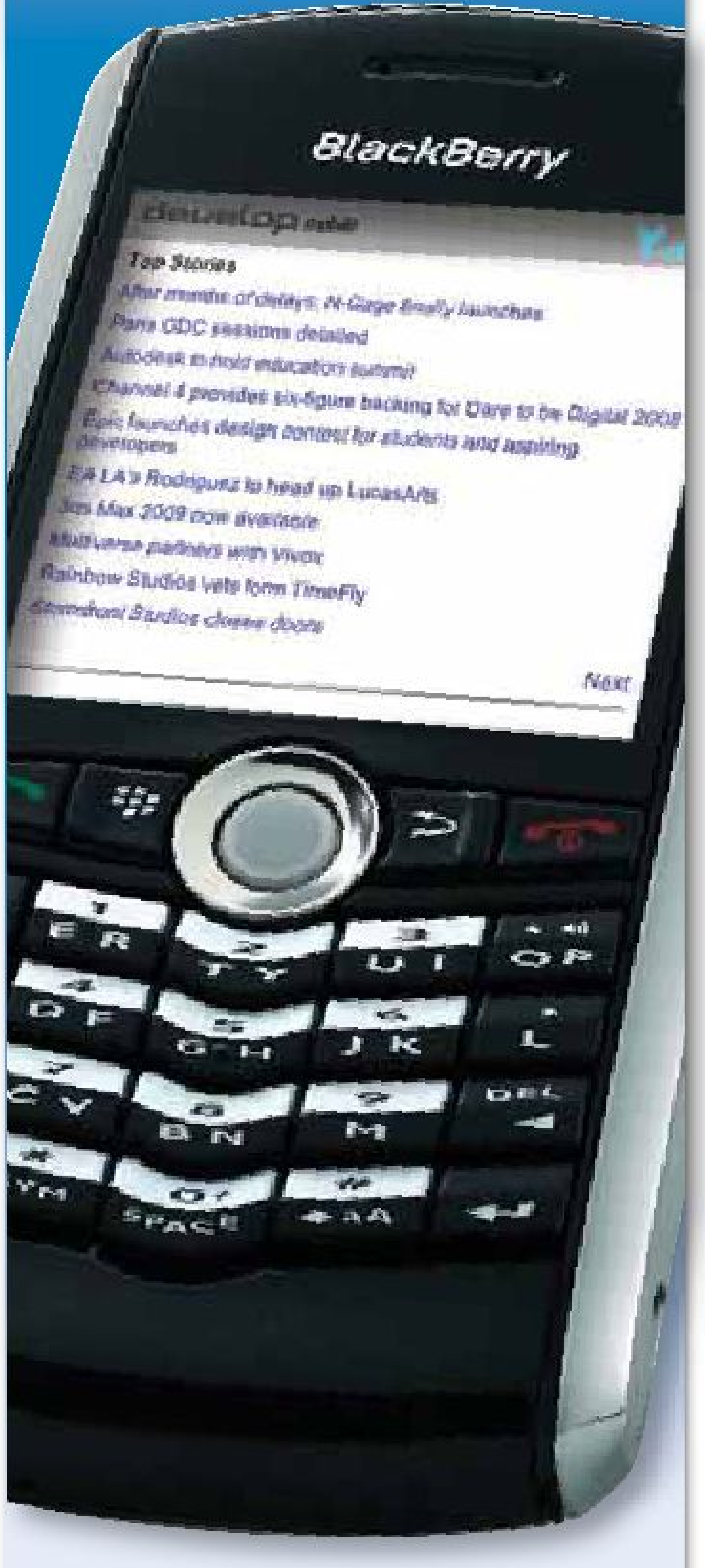

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WorldView

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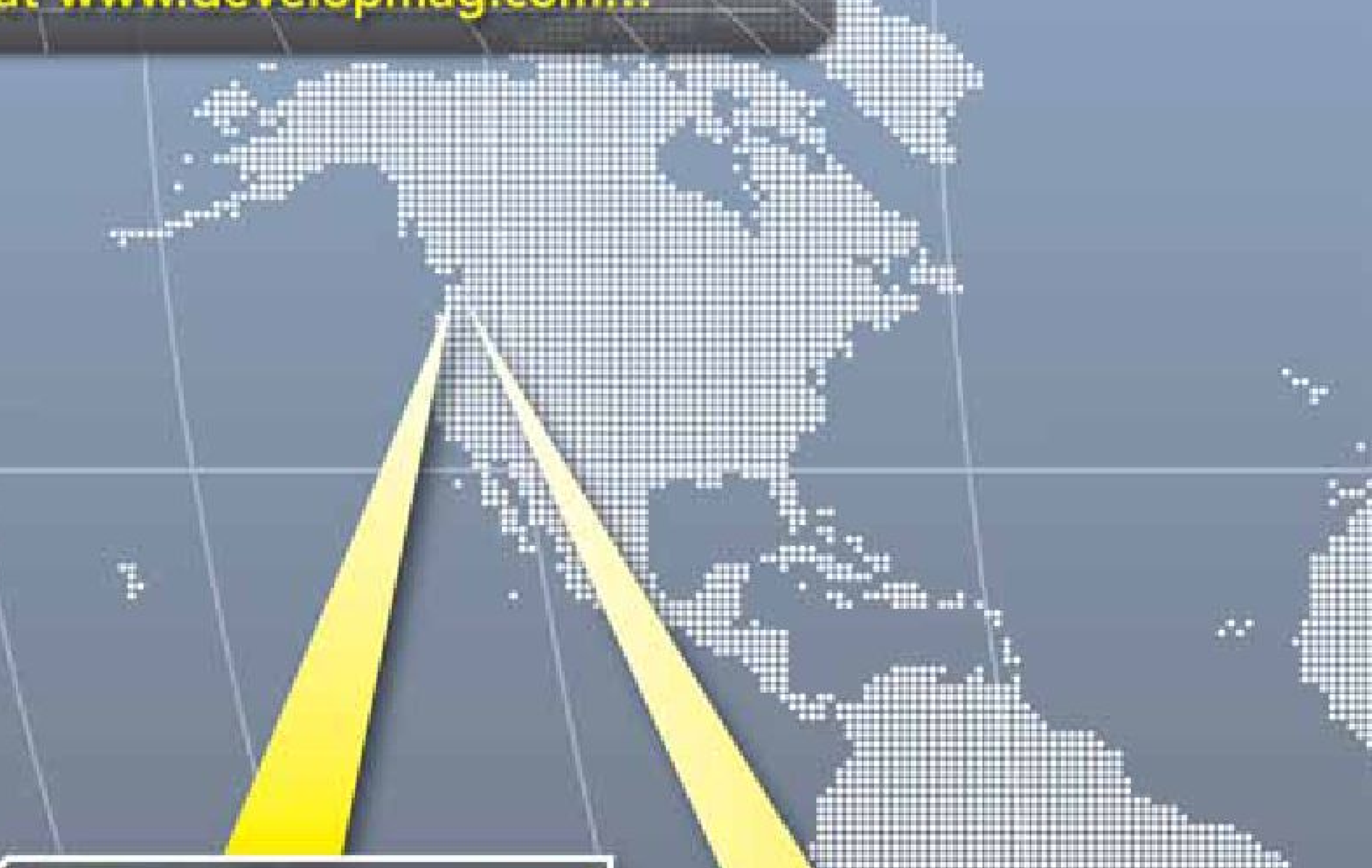

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REDMOND, USA (PART 1)

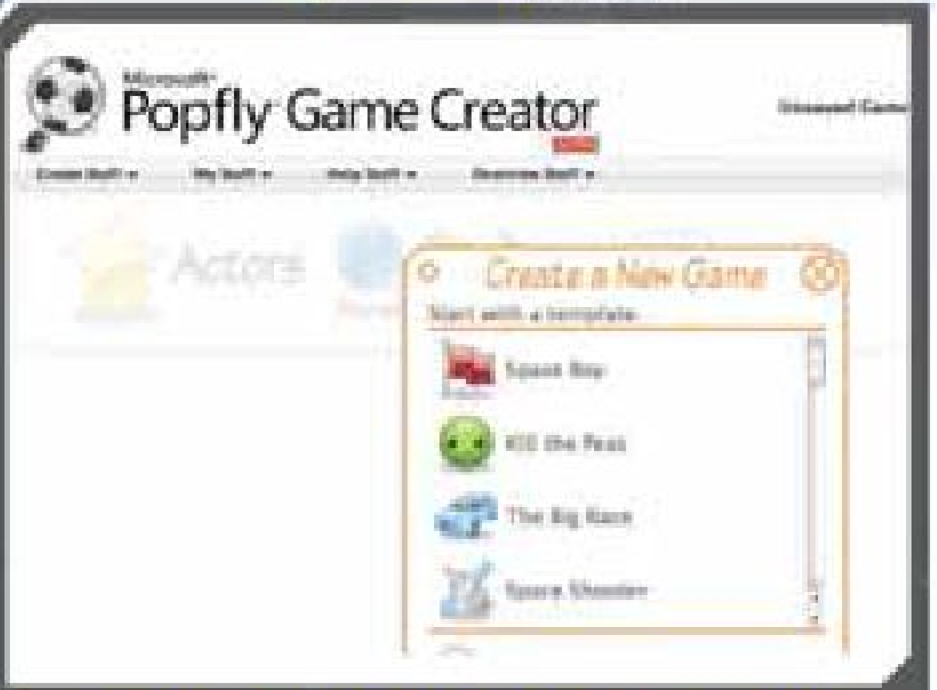
Microsoft has rebooted its Xbox Live Arcade strategy, with a number of changes on the way intended to improve the service – although the moves include ditching some 'unpopular' games.

Along with increasing the size limit on games to 350MB and introducing a new 1600 Microsoft Point price tier, the company is opening a new first-party studio dedicated to making XBLA titles and will start delisting titles which are at least six months old, have a Metacritic score below 65 and a conversion rate below six per cent on the service.

"While the service has had a lot of success and now boasts over 130 titles, we think it is time to continue our focus on quality over quantity. This means that we need to allow developers more time and more space to make even bigger and better games," said Microsoft's Marc Whitten.

On the new first-party studio, he said the firm is "going to be putting our money where our mouth is" by assembling a new team "which will be focused on high quality digital content creation". It's not yet known, however, where the new studio is based, or what its name or size will be. Whitten described all the moves as "a series of new policies along with a new internal approach and investment in the Xbox Live Arcade business going forward".

www.xbox.com



REDMOND, USA (PART 2)

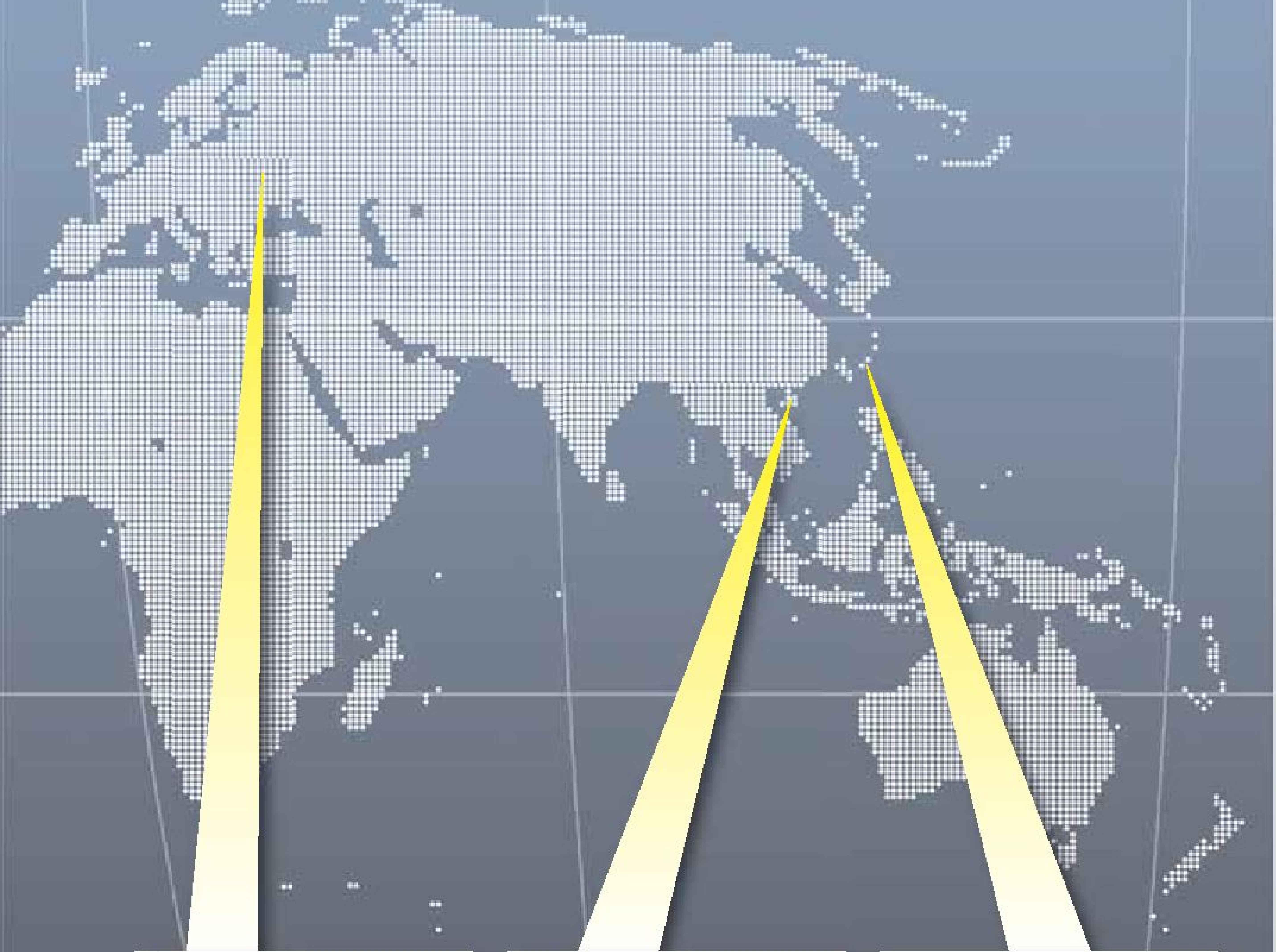
While its sister division rebuilds the Xbox Live Arcade team, Microsoft's mash-up focused Popfly team has unveiled its own low-end Game Creator, the next step down from the XNA Game Studio.

Popfly Game Creator is deisgned to be more accessible than Microsoft's XNA Game Studio by widening the net on who has the tools to make games. The simple software is currently available to try in alpha with more features being added soon.

"One of the things we've heard loud and clear is that games are the kinds of things that people would like to try to build," the company said.

The app is drag 'n' drop web software which allows creation and sharing of casual games based on 15 pre-built templates which cover genres like shooter, platformer and maze game. Games can then be embedded on a blog, Facebook profile or Vista Sidebar – provided the creator and intended user have Microsoft's Flash-rival Silverlight installed.

www.popfly.com/gamecreator/



KIEV, UKRAINE

The expansion of Ubisoft's studio empire continues apace, with the formation of a new team in Kiev. It's the fifth new studio Ubisoft has opened in recent months, with the firm saying it had expanded to Kiev as the city is home to over 100 of the Ukraine's 300 IT universities.

The company has had an East European development presence for over 15 years since opening a Bucharest, Romania studio in 1992. A team in Sofia, Bulgaria opened in 2006. Initially, the Kiev team will work with Ubisoft Bucharest on projects such as the PC version of *Tom Clancy's Hawx*.

www.ubisoft.com

SEOUL, KOREA

More Microsoft news: Bill Gates has announced that his firm will invest some $147m on growing its business in South Korea, with building a local games development team a priority.

"Another new development is a games development center to take some unique work here and adopt it to the 360 global market," an AFP report quotes Gates as saying during a meeting with President Lee Myung-Bak.

Gates also pledged that the money would also be used to invest in the automobile, education and other fields.

www.microsoft.com

TOKYO, JAPAN

Phil Harrison's successor as president of Sony's worldwide studios operation has been named, with the company choosing SCEA studios boss Shuhei Yoshida to run the format-holder's global games teams.

Yoshida joined Sony Computer Entertainment International in 1993, and was one of the initial members in establishing the PlayStation business. Later, he was appointed producer of the Product Development Department in April 1996, and joined Sony Computer Entertainment America as VP of Product Development in April 2000, since then producing many of the SCEA-made franchises.

www.playstation.com

GLOBAL REPORTS

USA: NATURAL VISION

Nvidia and Natural Motion have announced a new partnership closely aligning their PhysX and Morpheme technologies. Under the terms of the deal, Oxford, UK-based NaturalMotion's v2.0 release of animation engine Morpheme will incorporate PhysX, Nvidia's recently-acquired physics technology it obtained as part of its purchase of Ageia earlier this year. Morpheme will also support hardware-accelerated physics using Nvidia's PC cards.

www.nvidia.com
www.naturalmotion.com

JAPAN: SQUARE EYES

Talking to Reuters, Square Enix president Yoichi Wada has once again pledged to grow his company globally, but this time added that he expects to buy stakes in game developers – and confirmed he is already in talks with a number of parties.

"Economies of scale and breadth of scope is getting important. It may be a business alliance or it may be us taking a stake in others, but we need to go beyond traditional Square Enix," Wada said.

www.square-enix.com

USA: GAMES <HEART> NY?

A new report put together by New York's Center for an Urban Future says the beloved American city has the potential to be a world-class 'games city' like Montreal, Tokyo or Brighton. "New York undoubtedly has the potential to build on its recent gains and establish a larger video game industry. Doing so would help the city diversify its economy and create good-paying jobs in one of the nation's most promising sectors," the report said. You can read the whole thing online at developmag.com

www.nycfuture.org

JAPAN: PLATINUM SIGNED

Sega has signed up to publish three titles from Japanese outfit Platinum Games, the studio formed by a group of ex-Capcom employees, including *Resident Evil* creator Shinji Mikami.

The games in development for Sega are: *Bayonetta*, directed by *Devil May Cry* creator Hideki Kamiya, featuring a character 'with guns on her feet'; a DS sci-fi RPG called *Infinite Line*; and Wii title *MadWorld*, which is styled purely in two-tone black and white.

www.platinumgames.com

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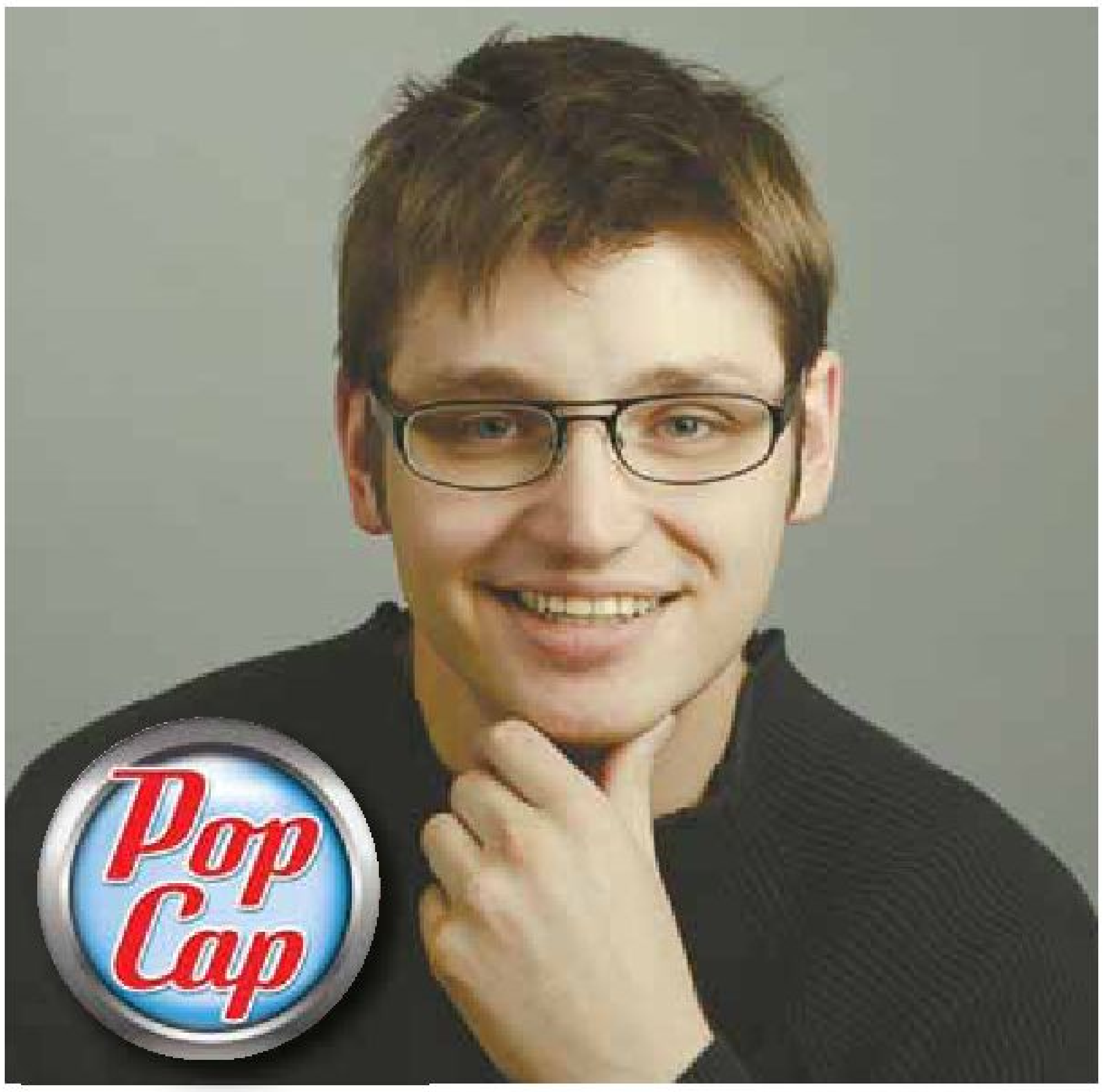
Top of the Pops

In this extract of an exclusive interview from CasualGaming.biz, we speak with PopCap co-founder **John Vechey** about the casual games developer and publisher and his thoughts on the marketplace overall…



You said at the Casual Connect event in Amsterdam that the casual games industry needs to evolve. How does PopCap plan to help that happen?
One of the things we are doing is thinking about casual not as a separate business, such as mobile or PC, but how it's all tied together. We're looking at is how we partner with other companies – who is out there, and how can we work with – and how we can reach new customers and find ways to get them to our games.

PopCap has been hugely successful – what's your secret?
I think it's all about the games and attention to detail and fighting for the creative process. It's tough working on games – *Peggle* has emotionally scarred developers that worked on it. They were so passionate about it and creative… I'm not saying it was like art, but that level of creativity is intense to make something new. And PopCap's willing to do that – we set the whole company up to do that, a company just can't switch to make games like that because all of our choices so far have been to guarantee that creative environment and then leveraging it as a business. So our business team and studio are completely separate – their schedules are completely separate and the games are done when they are done.

You acquired a few studios own last year and, so there's probably also a statement to be made there about remaining independent…
Yeah, and that's really what we already do. We meet with developers and find out how to work with them. PopCap doesn't have a traditional publishing arm – but what we're always doing is looking for developers we could acquire or work with. And they're studios that are good at making games and focused on delivering a great experience.

From a production point of view how would you say the making of a triple-A console game differs from a casual game? We're seeing all these core games enter the space as if casual games are quick and cheap to make…
There is this image that is finally now going away which says that it takes three to six months only to make a great casual game. And maybe for some people it does take three months. But for us it takes years. Peggle was in prototype mode for nine months. We've had games in the works for three years which were cancelled.

I actually think in comparison to the hardcore games space there is a lot more prototyping and a lot more iteration in that beginning part when it comes to core gameplay. That's kind of sad – because I often wish that in the core games space those developers had time to do a little bit more iteration on their games at the start. There are some developers that do that – Valve is one which I really respect; they take a long time on their games and I'm glad they do, otherwise I wouldn't get to enjoy *Team Fortress 2* and *Half-Life*.

> **"It takes years for us to make a great casual game…"**

We spend more time than anyone else in the casual games space on those things, sometimes over two years, and that tends to mean they cost over $500,000. In the core games space very few people are able to take that risk, except for rare cases like Valve or Blizzard.

On the point of budget – when will the casual games industry get to the point when it starts talking about million dollar and over budgets?
I think PopCap's actually about to do that. We have a title in development which has had over a million dollars spent on it so far, and it's still not announced.

How long has that been in the works?
It's been in full production for some time – we took a few wrong turns with the product and toned back to go in different directions. It's really tough to get the simple gameplay out there.

Would you say that the development of casual games differs from core games in that they tend to start with a concept, and the potential stories and characters are added on afterwards is needed, whereas a hardcore game starts with a character or story and then matched with a genre?
Yes, and that's where the hardcore industry has gone wrong – a lot of developers in that space having started with the core fun part of the game. Something like *Team Fortress* is a flawless example of executing on a good idea and then adding characters.

You oversee the PopCap strategy for the Mac, and were one of the first companies to make iPod games. There's speculation that a lot of their games activity, if it grows, will focus on casual games. So what are your plans for that platform?
Apple is an amazing company and doing some awesome things – the iPhone is probably the best consumer handset designed so far. I can't speak for their casual strategy, but with the iPhone I think it's going to change the mobile industry and have a significant impact overall – in fact we're already seeing its influence.

How much of the success of the platform will come down to its ubiquity? Or will it be driven by the fact it, like the DS, has a touch screen – which changes the way people interact with casual games?
I don't know how much it will be driven by touch screen – but from a games standpoint the touch screens are useful; if all mobile devices in future included that kind of interface I'd be very excited as that changes the way the mobile business works. We'd no longer be making a game for 200 handsets and just six or so.

But I think the simple fact that the iPhone has a really simple web browser is what will really help the mobile world, and help aid the world of mobile games.

READ THE FULL INTERVIEW AT WWW.CASUALGAMING.BIZ

#1

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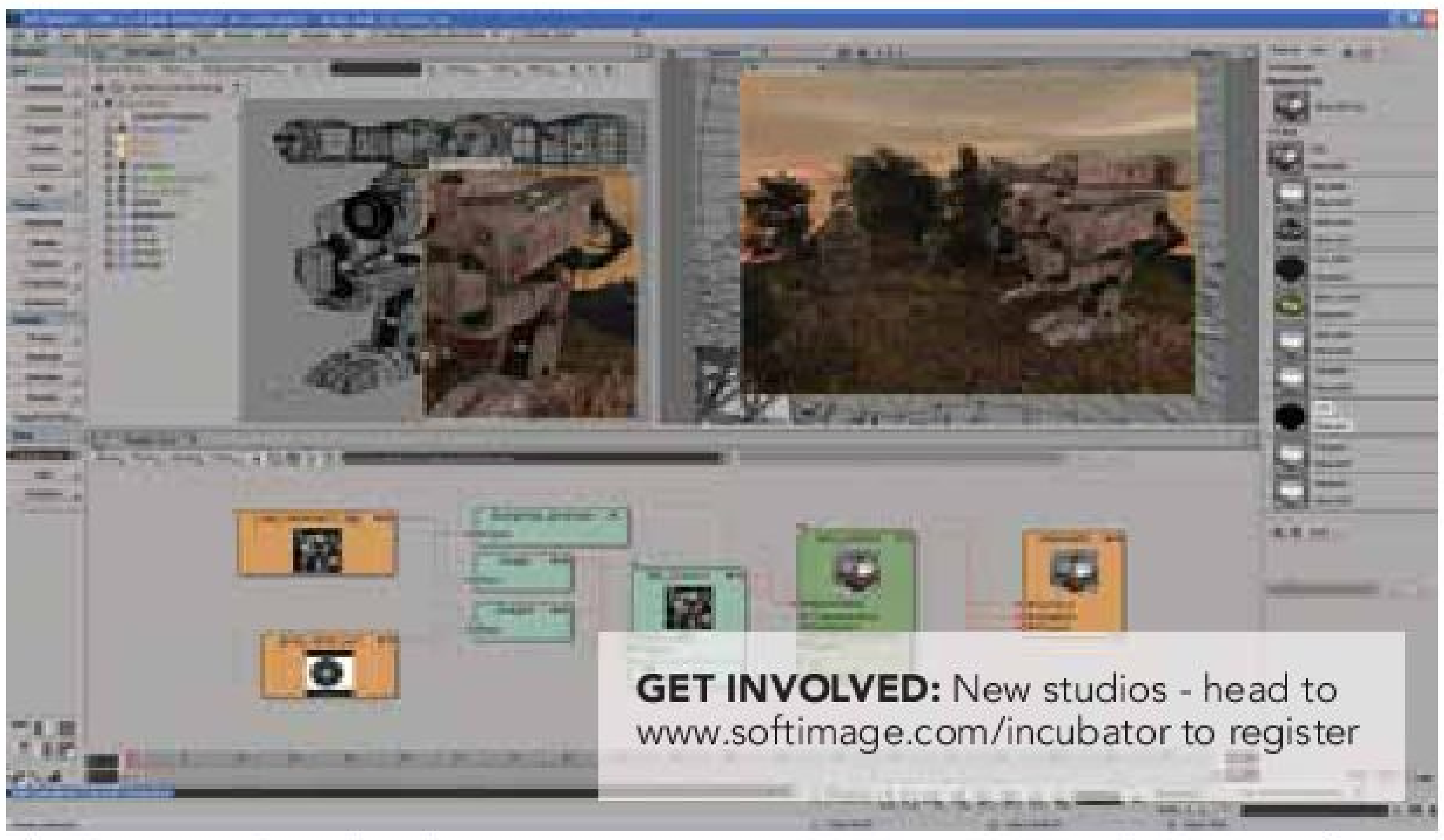
Softimage unveils Incubator

New program designed to support new casual games studios with cheaper tools • Tie-up with Develop confirmed



GET INVOLVED: New studios - head to www.softimage.com/incubator to register

XSI AND FACE ROBOT developer Softimage has unveiled a brand new incubator program exclusively available to newly-established studios and Develop readers.

The Softimage Incubator program will give approved applicant studios access to the firm's XSI 3D software at zero cost during their first year of business, with a affordable fixed quarterly payments for the remaining two years of the program. With the new trial cost-structure, Softimage's thinking is to 'remove the barriers to entry' for games developer, the firm said, saying it 'allows fledgling companies to preserve cash flow, and keep energies focused on the creative process'.

The Incubator program is specifically targeting new studios in the casual games space and "will offer developers who have great gaming ideas a way to start up with less front-end financial investment on their software tools", Softimage said, adding that it wants to get 3D modeling, animation and rendering tools into the hands of developers early in their business' lifecycle and help get their ideas to market quicker. XSI is already in use by successful studios such as Lionhead, Pandemic, Capcom, Crytek and Ubisoft.

"With the wider availability of enabling technologies and better access to distribution, the opportunities for independent game development are growing at a record pace," said Marc Stevens, general manager of Softimage and VP of Avid Technology.

"The Incubator Program enables upcoming talent in the industry to develop their game ideas and showcase their creativity without the typical financial hurdles. Flexible financing is just one of the latest additions to a suite of products and services designed to meet the needs of a quickly evolving industry."

For the program's debut, Softimage is partnering exclusively with Develop to choose the initial candidates; five studios will be selected for the Incubator's pilot program. Applications are open now with the deadline being July 1st 2008. All applicants must be registered as a business with a project concept by July 1st.

Those interested should head to www.softimage.com/incubator to find out more.

"The Incubator program is interesting as it provides an incentive for independent and first–time game developers to run with their ideas and start up their own businesses," said Michael French, editor of Develop and executive editor of CasualGaming.biz.

"We look forward to working with Softimage on this pilot project and tracking the progress of the selected candidates as they progress through the travails of a startup."

More information can be found here: **www.softimage.com/incubator**

DEVELOP DIARY

YOUR COMPLETE GAMES DEVELOPMENT EVENT CALENDAR FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD...

PARIS GDC

June 23rd & 24th
Paris, France
www.parisgdc.com

After a respectable debut in Lyon last December, the French take on GDC turns its attentions to Paris. This year's event features a number of key names from the development sphere in new talks, and a handful of sessions that were featured in February's GDC but which attendees may not have had the chance to see. Check out our preview on page 30.

JUNE 2008

DEVSTATION 08
June 10th and 11th
London, UK
www.devstation.scee.com

GAMEHORIZON CONFERENCE
June 18th and 19th
Newcastle, UK
www.gamehorizon.net

PARIS GDC
June 23rd to 24th
Paris, France
www.parisgdc.com

JULY 2008

VISUAL WEB CONVENTION
July 9th to 10th
London, UK
www.viswebconvention.com

E3 SUMMIT 2008
July 15th to 17th
Los Angeles, USA
www.e3expo.com

DEVELOP CONFERENCE
July 29th to 31st
Brighton, UK
www.developconference.com

DEVELOP INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS
July 30th
Brighton, UK
www.developmag.com/develop-awards

XNA GAMEFEST
July 22nd and 23rd
Seattle, USA
www.xnagamefest.com

CASUAL CONNECT AMERICA
July 23rd to 25th
Seattle, USA
seattle.casualconnect.org

AUGUST 2008

XNA GAMEFEST UK
August 6th
London, UK
www.xnagamefest.com/UK.htm

SIGGRAPH 2008
August 11th to 15th
Los Angeles, USA
www.siggraph.org

GCDC 2008
August 18th to 20th
Leipzig, Germany
www.gcdc.eu

GAMES CONVENTION
August 20th to 24th
Leipzig, Germany
www.gc-germany.com

SEPTEMBER 2008

WOMEN IN GAMES
September 10th to 12th
Warwick University, UK
www.womeningames.com

AUSTIN GDC
September 15th to 18th
Texas, USA
www.gdconf.com

CHINA GDC 08
September 24th to 26th
Beijing, China
www.gdcchina.cn

NOVEMBER 2008

GAME CONNECTION
November 5th to 7th
Lyon, France
www.game-connection.com

MONTREAL GAMES SUMMIT
November 6th and 7th
Montreal, Canada
www.sijm.ca/2008/

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ANIMATE
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INTEGRATE
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HOW UBISOFT GAVE
AN ASSASSIN HIS SOUL.

autodesk.co.uk/Games

Image courtesy of Ubisoft

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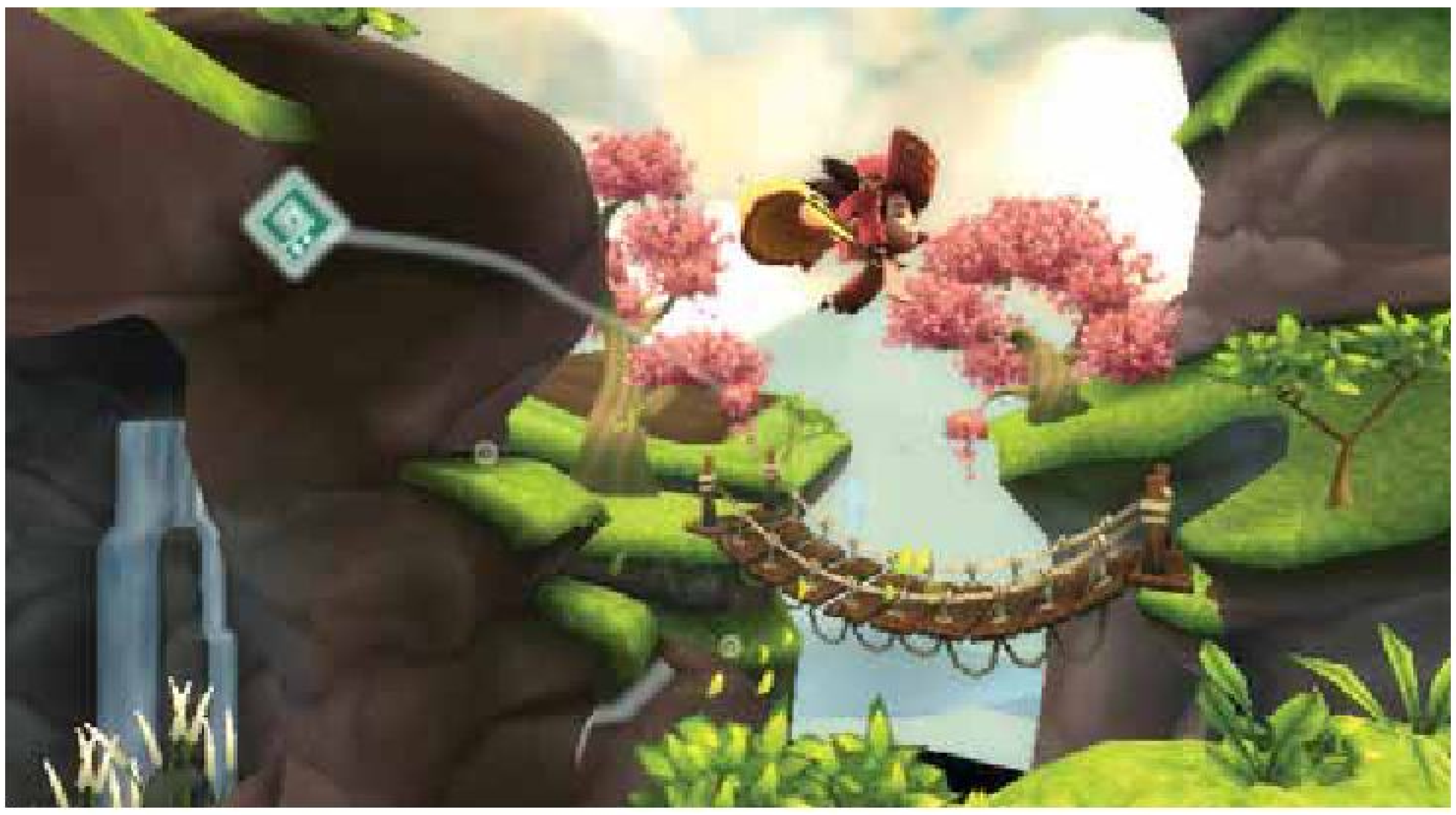
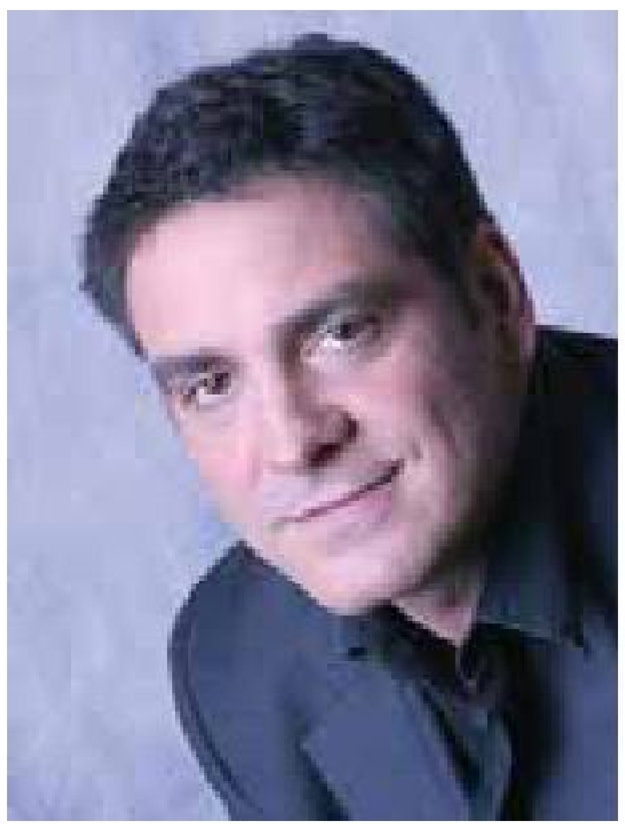
‘Wii can discover new genres’

SPECIAL REPORT: Nintendo says that its new developer-friendly download platform can help discover new ‘unique gamepaly experiences’ as it favours cheaper, smaller titles over big budget fare





WiiWare games like LostWinds (left) are helping the platform find new game experiences, claims Nintendo’s Laurent Fischer (above)

by Michael French

THE LAUNCH OF WiiWare in North America and Europe will help signify a new era for games developers, Nintendo has claimed.

Speaking during a special showcase of the service’s launch games at its European HQ in Frankfurt, Germany Nintendo Europe’s marketing chief Laurent Fischer said that the company had “from the very beginning” planned to add an open distribution platform like WiiWare to its offering as part of its market-widening strategy.

Fischer told the assembled journalists and developers that the platform was successfully removing barriers between studios and consumers. “The general way Nintendo is approaching game development and game creation is very unique – we think the game creator shouldn’t have to fight against anything and only focus on their own creativity. Technology, publishers… all these things shouldn’t influence the creative process. To us that’s the way to create innovative software,” he said.

Nintendo expects that the service will in time help unique ideas and new gameplay genres make it to market, he said, via its cheaper production demands.

“Because it is an open digital platform it allows people to work and not have to take care of financial costs and risks associated with selling a game into retail – the things that make developers sometimes too uncomfortable to take a creative risk. Because all the barriers to publish software are lower, and you have a direct connection to consumers, you don’t have to worry about taking a risk.”

“If you have a single creative idea that would make a great game, maybe the idea isn’t big enough to full a normal DVD but now you have a way to get that great idea out,” added Fischer.

“I’m not sure if something like *Tetris*, given its concept, would be released at all today,” he said, echoing previous comments by Nintendo boss Satoru Iwata.

Developers can also choose which territory to release their games in, which offers the opportunities for culturally targeted games, said Fischer, who give a cricket game as an example. “It would work well with the remote, but it would require a lot for a retail game – would a publisher take a risk on that?” he added. But a cricket game would find its feet in the UK, India and Australia, he said, saying that developers could target these regions for such a title.

> ***“Technology, publishers… these things shouldn’t influence the creative process…”***
>
> ***Laurent Fischer, Nintendo***

SMALL SCALE

WiiWare’s other strengths, said Fischer, was its encouraging small teams to work on games that won’t come under scrutiny from concept approval. Over half the 100+ WiiWare games in production are being made by teams less than 20, and the only requirements developers must adhere to (apart from making sure it actually runs) are ones relating to QA and age ratings.

“We do not have anything to do with the concept,” added Laurent, and he’s right – to an extent. While formally Nintendo doesn’t have concept approval the way other formats do for their digital platforms (and, indeed, their disc-based games), it’s clear the firm has collaborated closely with those working on third-party launch games to offer feedback and advice.

With no major first-party game on the service (a deliberate choice to match the platform’s laissez-faire approach it seems), Nintendo seems to have chosen Frontier’s *LostWinds* as its initial centre-piece title. It’s a poster boy for Nintendo’s entire ethos behind the service. Developed in just three months (although the concept was kicking around Frontier for some time) by a 12-man team and on a budget around £100,000 (that’s our estimate – one factor of the WiiWare non-disclosure agreement is that studios don’t disclose exactly how cheap their games have been to make), *LostWinds* has received numerous good reviews as we went to press.

While that’s not to say Nintendo has its favourites, it’s clear the company does favour third-party studios when it comes to some creative elements. The Gameloft-developed *TV Show King* breaks with tradition and allows a third-party game to incorporate players’ Mii avatars – something even the likes of EA hasn’t entirely been allowed access to.

Meanwhile Two Tribes’ puzzle platformer *Toki Tori* – itself a game that was originally made for the Game Boy Color but now has a new lease of life when remade for a digital platform – sends messages from the game characters back to the Wii dashboard, a trick previously reserved for first-party game *Super Mario Galaxy*.

Laurent says that Nintendo also hopes that developers step up to take advantage of its peripherals as well, such as the Wii Balance Board or Zapper – all of which can be utilised by WiiWare titles.

NEW IDEAS, NEW ERA?

All of this comes back to finding new gameplay ideas, added Fischer: “We have the opportunity to provide Wii owners unique gameplay experiences. From the beginning Nintendo has been focused towards making sure anyone can play video games, be that via playing on a handheld via the DS or with the Wii. The key is that the entire video game industry has an important role to play in making that happen. Previously, the industry has seen more turnover of profits, but less people buying software.”

And WiiWare “can trigger lots more creative ideas,” and find “unique gameplay experiences”, said Laurent.

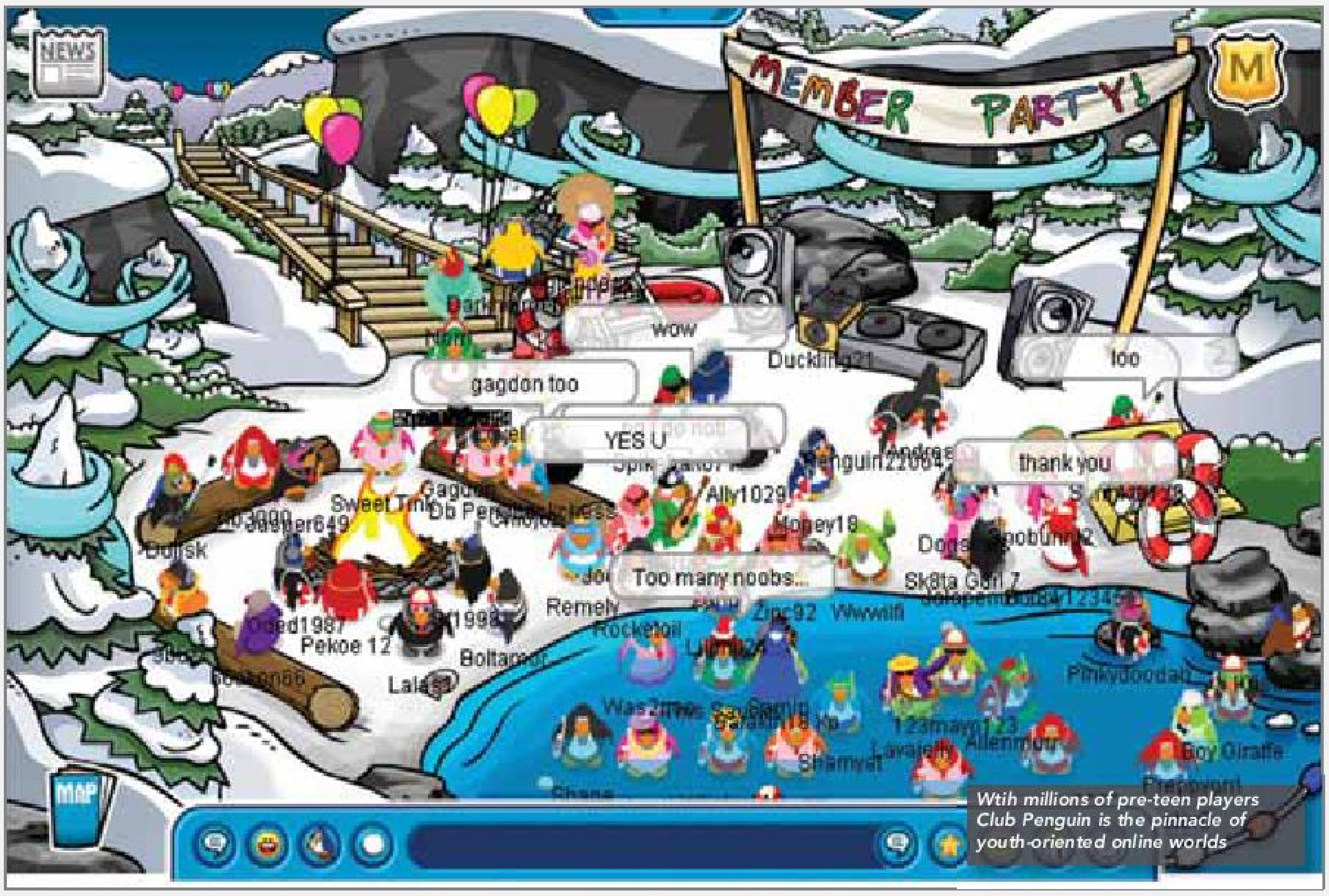
Of course, as the platform currently stands, its line-up is a mix of the familiar and the reinvented – *LostWinds* is the stand-out title because its one of just a few that is based on wholly new IP. In time Nintendo expects the range of software will grow and mature, but only with outside influence hence why Nintendo has so keenly courted third-parties for games on the platform.

“A successful platform cannot exist in the long term without every kind of game from every kind of publisher. Because the structure of the WiiWare platform allows small teams to work well together we think that we can create an important dynamic for the development community around the world. If WiiWare fulfils its potential we will be able to offer new gameplay experiences and some surprises.”

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

by Nick Gibson

Child's Play



Wtih millions of pre-teen players Club Penguin is the pinnacle of youth-oriented online worlds

In 2005 the BBC conducted a large scale, nationwide survey to learn more about British media consumption habits and attitudes. Unlike many similar research efforts, the survey encompassed children of age six and upwards and included games amongst the media investigated. The results were fascinating and were probably a wake-up call for the Beeb. The survey found that 98 per cent of children aged six to 15 play games at least once a month, the vast majority at least once a week. More surprisingly, games were rated as the single most important medium for six to 15 year olds, ahead of TV, music, cinema, reading, DVDs, the internet and mobile phones.

The children of today represent a generation for whom interactive entertainment is an integral part of growing up. They are also a generation comfortable and highly adept online. Combine these and you have a new games frontier of colossal potential but one in which most 'traditional' games companies appear largely disinterested. As a result, this new market for children's MMOGs and virtual worlds is witnessing a stampede of companies from outside of the games industry, especially from the toy and TV industries.

Start-ups also feature prominently in the gold rush, backed by venture capital investors eager to see Club Penguin-scale returns on their investment. Some $30m has been raised during the first four months of 2008 specifically for new children's MMOGs and virtual worlds, compared to around $50m during the whole of 2007 (mostly for US companies).

Activity in this space has, as a result, become frenetic. Where three years ago there were less than a dozen child-focused virtual worlds, there are now 50. We are also tracking an additional 45 that are currently in development and do not believe that this rate of growth will slow any time soon. Around a quarter of the virtual worlds that have launched are based on existing kids' properties such as Beanie Babies and Build-a-Bear.

The most popular or these virtual worlds attract millions of monthly users who devote huge amounts of time to socialising and playing in them. Mattel's Barbie Girls virtual world generated over 11m registered users in its first 12 months alone. The seminal Neopets virtual world has 12m monthly users, Habbo Hotel 8.5m per month and so on. The market has shown demonstrate demographic segmentation with, for example, separate virtual worlds primarily targeting girls under 8 (Pixie Hollow), girls under 13 (Barbie Girls) and girls over 13 (Zwinktopia).

> *"The children of today present a new games frontier of colossal potential..."*

These sites feature a broad array of business models and although a few are simply intended as loss-leading promotional tools to reinforce an existing brand, most are operated as profit centres. A number are extremely profitable. Initial and ongoing development costs are a fraction of typical MMOGs. Most feature simplistic gameplay, are browser-based, developed in Flash and opt for low-res cartoon graphics over the verisimilitude sought by hard-core developers. Almost all of the worlds are offered for free but feature advertising and/or optional payment models such as subscriptions or retail purchases (e.g. toys or cards) which unlock exclusive parts of the world. Around 40 per cent feature micropayments, mostly geared around avatar and virtual world customisation. We estimate that subscriptions and micropayments in children's MMOGs and virtual worlds alone generated over $300m in 2007 and will grow over 30 per cent this year. Add in advertising and retail sales and it becomes easy to see why there is so much interest in this market.

Although these virtual worlds may seem rudimentary from a technology point of view compared to traditional video games development, there are crucial differences. Most important is that the developer must transition from being a product creator to a service provider as ongoing maintenance and development coupled with direct, continuous customer interaction are necessities. This puts such development beyond the comfort zone of most developers (and more towards that of web designers who make up a significant proportion of the current market despite most having little or no games development experience). Add to this the myriad challenges of dealing with children (content, security, legality etc.) and the proposition is not as straightforward as may initially seem.

However, these are surmountable hurdles and there is a great opportunity here for independent developers with their established multi-disciplinary development processes and superior understanding of gameplay and player engagement.

The majority of the worlds have been or are being created by third party developers. We expect demand for third party development services to grow as more TV, toy and merchandising companies with children's IP look to extend and differentiate their brands online. Those that have already entered the market show no signs of reducing their investment and some appear intent on making virtual worlds necessary online entertainment extensions for all of their major properties. Europe trails the USA (which represents the vast majority of the market to date) by quite a margin but we believe that it will invariably seek to follow the USA's lead with European studios likely to be the principal beneficiaries.

Nick Gibson is a director at Games Investor Consulting, providing corporate finance services to the games, media and finance industries **www.gamesinvestor.com**

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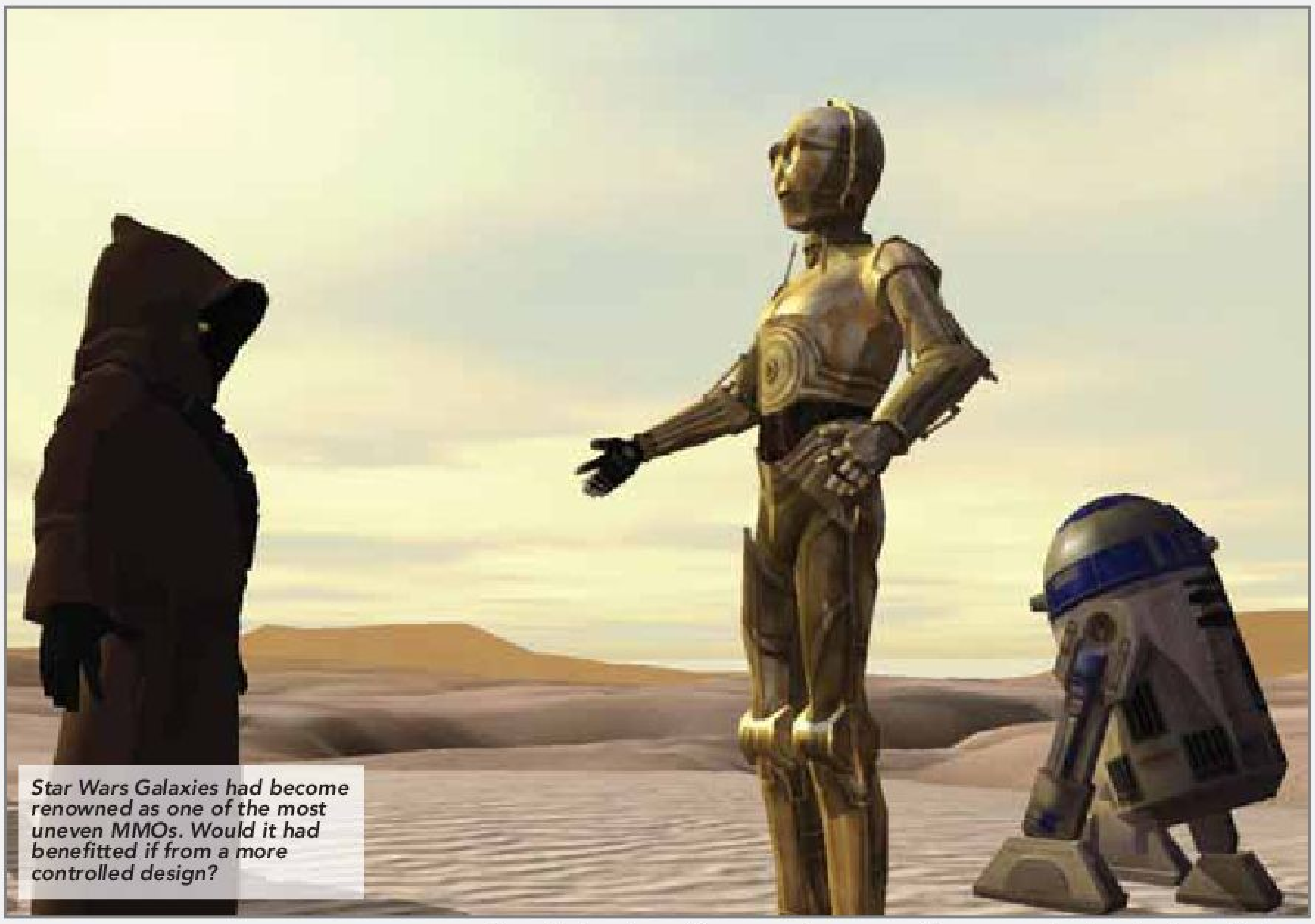
DESIGN DOC

by The Alpenwolf

The Little Things



Star Wars Galaxies had become renowned as one of the most uneven MMOs. Would it had benefitted if from a more controlled design?

A company spokesperson is also promising fixes for the multitude of problems in Star Wars Galaxies that have plagued the MMORPG for the last five years. "This time you can trust us," said SOE director Constance Phuckup, citing the company's extensive experience in dealing with glitchey, poorly implmented, unbalanced MMOs.
- taken from Slashdot

That's a pretty harsh dismissal of a game that was once, a long, long time ago, one for which many gamers had high hopes. And yet, it's also a pertinent reminder of the fact that the success of every designer, producer, and developer will ultimately depend upon the way in which their games are perceived by the gaming public. Unfortunately, it will not matter how brilliant your overall design might be if you can't successfully articulate it to those responsible for developing it, if you're saddled with an incompetent producer or development team, or if you make a bad design decision that has the effect of multiplying all of your good decisions by zero.

There are some decisions you can't do anything about as a designer because they don't fall within your area of responsibility. For example, it's quite clear that *Vanguard* was released long before it was ready, which appears to have had a significantly negative effect on the numbers of players interested in playing it. This probably wasn't the designer's decision or the producer's, but it's one they've had to live with nevertheless. Contrast these results with the habitual lateness of two very successful developers, Blizzard and id, who are famous for their 'it's done when it's done' approach. Would more time or a better ability to estimate the time required from the start led to happier results for *Vanguard*? While it would be nice to think so, that's not necessarily so.

Since some important decisions are beyond our scope, it's important to focus on the ones that are not, especially those relating to areas where a designer can easily trip up. The most basic one is setting and genre; one of my biggest mistakes was to take what was intended to be a graphical showpiece and setting it in space! Now, space and science fiction are practically synonymous with state-of-the-art special effects, but they also involve an awful lot of boring black real estate on the screen. Throw in a few landings on rocky moons and nickel-iron asteroids and you've got yourself one monochromatic visual spectacular. It doesn't matter how many polys you spend on the models or how high-resolution your textures are, at the end of the day you're still showing off some rocks on a black background.

> **"It will not matter how brilliant your overall design is if you're saddled with an incompetent producer or development team…"**

Now, consider the limited genre range of the games being produced versus the observable range in other marketplaces. Fantasy and science fiction represent only ten percent of the overall fiction market, and yet they serve as the basis for the overwhelming majority of MMO games currently available and in development.

Worse yet, the high fantasy of medieval elves and dwarves that is virtually synonymous with the MMO and most fantasy games has been largely supplanted in the fiction world by the female-dominated urban fantasy that has rapidly taken over the SF/F section in most bookstores. Westerns are not popular today, but the romance and mystery genres continue to sell well, so the wise designer should at least consider the possibilities offered by these other genres before simply proceeding automatically with yet another SF/F, military, or gangster design. There isn't space for a similar discussion of interface, but this is another area where design assumptions often substitute for contemplation.

Even some basic mistakes which are, strictly-speaking, outside the designer's responsibility should be anticipated when they are easily fixed. Just to give one example, I couldn't help but notice that the basic walking and running animations of the player's character in two major MMO's I played recently were simply terrible. This is a minor issue from a technical perspective, about as minor as it gets, but it has a tremendous effect on the player's perception of the game, its quality, and the likelihood that it will be entertaining as he gets further into it.

How does this not get fixed when it's so simple? Because it's simple! Technical guys are always focused on the bugs, on solving the mysteries lying beneath the things that don't work at all, and they tend to assume that they will be able to go back and take care of all the low-hanging fruit later. But, as is all too often the case, later often doesn't arrive before the drop-dead date. The designer who understands and anticipates this tendency to prioritize the difficult over the merely important can be of real assistance to his producer by raising the probable issues before they arise.

The Alpenwolf is a professional game designer who has been active in the industry for 17 years and designed games for some of the largest American and Japanese publishers. He has been known to visit Ironforge in the company of a large white wolf. design@alpenwolf.com

SHERIDANS

Have you got protection?

Well-constructed employment contracts are the first step towards protecting company IP, says **Tahir Basheer**…

Tahir Basheer *is a partner at Sheridans, the entertainment law firm. tbasheer@sheridans.co.uk*

Like other media businesses, games firms look to attract creative individuals whilst keeping control of their output in order to establish a profitable enterprise.

This balancing act is the mainstay of creative industry. However, prospective employees and the courts will take a dim view of an employer who seeks to gain more control than is reasonable, or attempts to unduly restrict an individual's trade when employment ceases.

Dovetailing the protection of the company's assets with an employee's rights is best undertaken through the initial employment contract. Most disputes arise when employment is terminated, but it is by having the correct procedures and agreements in place at the outset that the employer is best positioned for any future legal action.

There are three key areas in an employment contract: IP protection, confidentiality, and control of the employee when he or she leaves.

Intellectual Property protection

The law enables companies to control works created by their employees, via IP rights. The default legal position is that the company owns any IP created during employment.

If an individual wants to undertake independent projects that aren't captured by his/her employment contract, such work needs to be carried on outside of work time using the employee's own equipment, and be distinct from their output as employees. Such individuals should seek the consent of their employer first, so they can later demonstrate the company acknowledged the external project was separate from their work duties.

Employee confidentiality

There is an implied duty at common law for employees to treat trade secrets as company property. Sensible companies go further and spell out in detail in employment contracts exactly what information employees should consider confidential. Clearly, confidentiality restrictions must not hinder the day-to-day duties of the employee, such as talking to suppliers or sharing sensitive information to win customers. It is when an individual uses company information to advantage himself that conflicts arise.

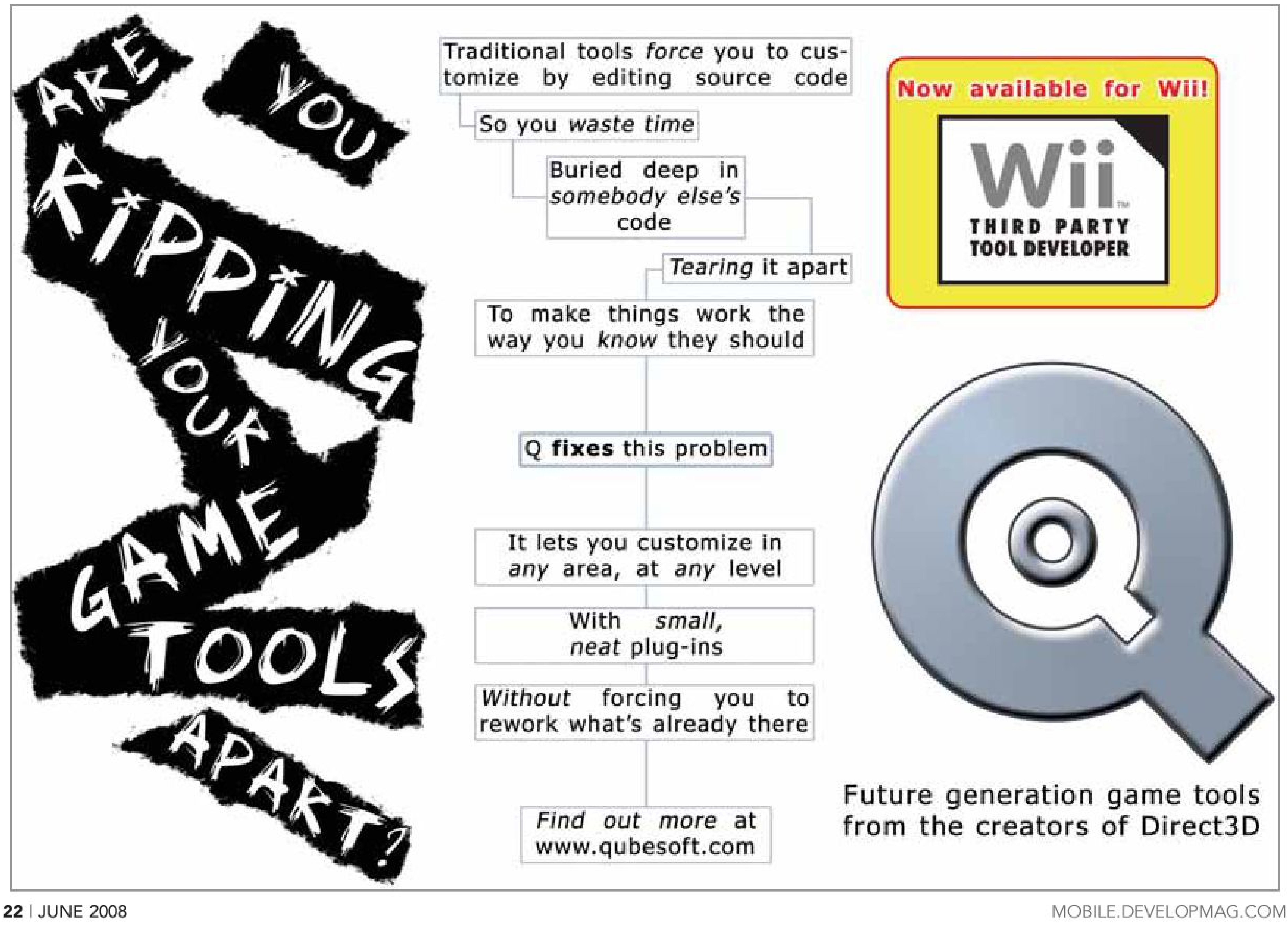
Restrictive practices post-employment

The termination of an individual's employment is a risky time for employers. Companies may seek protection through non-compete clauses, but to be enforceable they must be fair.

An employment contract may restrain the individual from competing or soliciting clients or poaching employees, provided such provisions go no further than is reasonably necessary to protect the company's legitimate business interests. The courts will reject any restriction that is too lengthy or broad in scope, or that prevents someone from working at all.

A senior executive with unique knowledge of a company's clients could present a serious threat if set up in competition with his/her old employer, for instance. Provided the employee was properly briefed and remunerated during employment, the courts would likely uphold a clause preventing him/her from competing directly with his/her previous employer until such time as the company could provide continuity for its clients.

Alternatively, a company may make provision for gardening leave. Here the individual is relieved of duties but retained on the payroll, say for six months. Certain preparatory steps towards a new business are allowed, but the employee must abide by the standard duty of care towards their employer. Once employment ends, they can hit the ground running.



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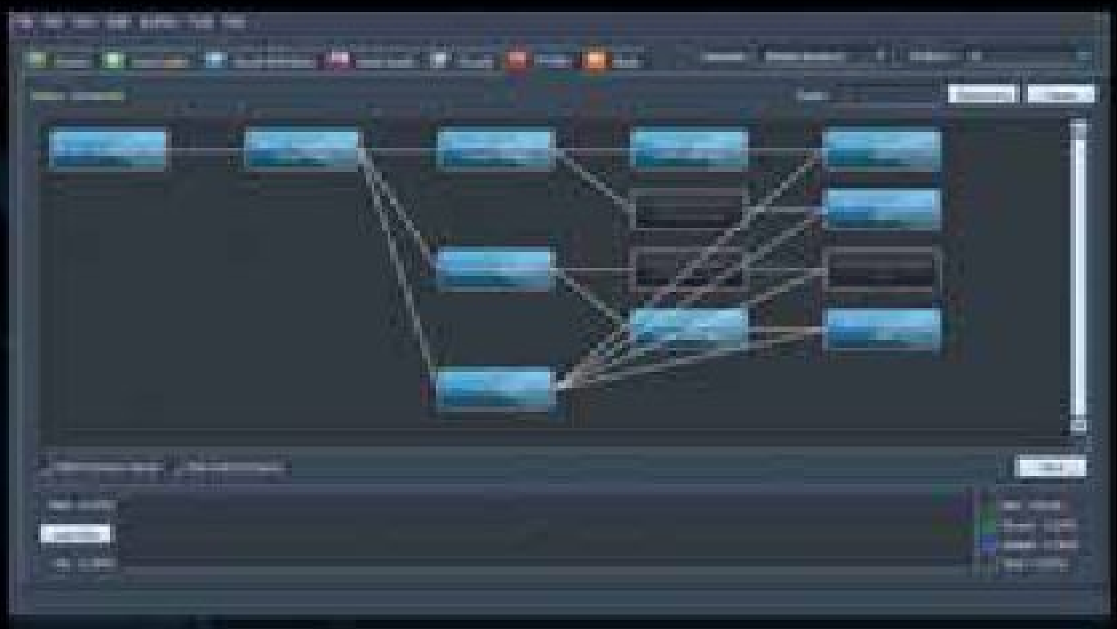

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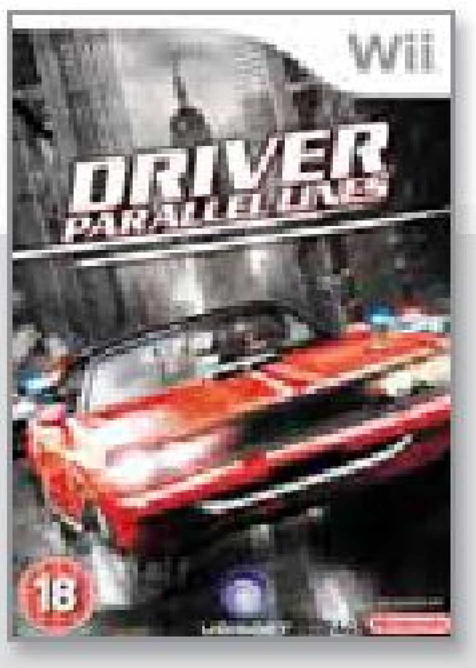

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1989: *Ballistix*
1995: *Destruction Derby*
1997: *Destruction Derby 2* and *Thunder Truck Rally*
1999: *Driver*
2000: *Driver 2*
2004: *Driv3R*
2006: *Driver: Parallel Lines*
2007: *Driver 76* (PSP port of *Parallel Lines* by Sumo Digital)

OWNERSHIP HISTORY

1984: Reflections Interactive founded by Martin Edmondson

1989: Reflections releases first million unit seller, *Shadow of the Beast*

1995: Reflections enters driving market with 1m-selling *Destruction Derby*

1998: Reflections Interactive acquired by GT Interactive in advance of its release of *Driver* (in 1999) for $41m

1999: Infogrames acquires 70 per cent stake in GT Interactive for $135m and subsequently renames GT Interactive to Atari Inc

2003: Reflections Interactive used as security (along with several other Atari assets) to secure a $50m facility for Atari from General Electric Capital Corp.

2006: *Driver* IPR (brand and technology) and existing staff and most of the assets from Reflections Interactive sold by Atari to Ubisoft for €19m

CREATOR: Martin Edmondson

Driver was Reflections Interactive's third driving game brand. Its first, *Destruction Derby* – a 'smash-em up' driving game that sold over three million units across two iterations and was one of the first few high quality titles to demonstrate what could be achieved on the new console – was an early hit on PlayStation.

Destruction Derby and the less successful *Thunder Truck Rally* showcased the studio's unique understanding of physics and collision technology as well as the more commonly-found skill set in racing games.

Released two years after these two series, *Driver* added sophistication of plot, character and higher production values to the updated racing technology. Players take the role of a 1970s undercover policeman trying to break into a crime syndicate. The game is set in four real-world cities and although the game is mission-based, the cities are freely navigable giving the player the ability to access all areas – the same open world freedom which contributed to the success of *Grand Theft Auto 3* (which came out two years after *Driver*).

The original *Driver* received broad critical praise and sold well, although the reception for the sequel, released in a rush the following year, was considerably more mixed. Despite more expansive gameplay features (such as the ability for the player's character to get out of their car), many reviewers condemned the game for appearing to be incomplete and rushed to market. However the original game's sales momentum was maintained and the sequel was a commercial success.

However *Driv3r*, the first *Driver* game to be released on PlayStation 2 and Xbox, suffered at the hands of the games press which mauled it. Despite a longer lead time for the title as the studio got to grips with the new platforms, the game suffered from appearing to be less than completely balanced and finished. This resulted in the accusation that publisher Infogrames had rushed the game to market, which was not inconceivable given the financial precariousness of Infogrames at the time. This time around, the game suffered at retail, although achieving two million unit sales on a new platform was far from dismal.

Some of the third game's problems were addressed in the most recent *Driver* game, *Driver: Parallel Lines*, but the title suffered from lack of support from its owner and publisher, Atari. Although the on-foot sections remain, the studio returned to the tried and tested formula from earlier games. Critics were a little more receptive, but by this time the damage to the franchise had been done and moderately improved review scores were not able to prevent it performing poorly at retail.

In 2006 the studio found a more stable and viable home when Reflections and its IPR were sold to Ubisoft. A version of *Parallel Lines* for PSP (called *Driver 76* and developed by Sumo Digital) begun under Atari was an improvement on its immediate predecessor, with higher review scores. A new *Driver* for current generation consoles is expected, but its release date has yet to be announced.

COMPANY INCEPTION AND GROWTH

Reflections was founded in 1984 by Martin Edmondson, with a range of titles released on BBC Micro such as *Raveskull*, *Codename Droid* and *Ballistix*, each of which charted at number one on the platform. Its first major commercial success came in 1989 when it released *Shadow of the Beast*, a side-scrolling action game that went on to achieve over a million unit sales under the auspices of UK publisher Psygnosis. Psygnosis was acquired by Sony in 1993 to form the basis of its European PlayStation development and publishing division; Reflections continued to use Psygnosis for its products including its initial successful forays into the driving market with *Destruction Derby*.

With a string of commercial successes behind it, Reflections was in a strong enough position to be able to retain the IPR to its next title, *Driver*, whose publishing rights were eventually picked up by new publisher GT Interactive. In the year before its eventual release GT, recognising a potential blockbuster franchise in the making, acquired Reflections and its *Driver* IPR for 2.28m shares in common GT stock (worth at the time of acquisition approximately $13.5m) plus cash and options which valued the sale at a total of $41m at the time of the transaction (although GT Interactive's shares fell in value soon afterwards). By the time *Driver 2* had come out a year later in 2000, *Driver* had already achieved over five million unit sales.

GT Interactive was transferred in 1999 into the hands of ambitious French publisher Infogrames who had acquired a 70 per cent interest for $135m. Infogrames shortly thereafter acquired Hasbro Interactive (the computer, video and online games division of toy company Hasbro) and began restructuring its US and European operations. Infogrames had grown rapidly through a multitude of acquisitions, financed by multiple convertible loan issues, but struggled to create a profitable development and publishing entity out of them.

Driver 2 achieved similar success to the first title – the two titles achieved lifetime sales of 12m between them – but *Driv3r* failed to match this success (although it achieved some two million in unit sales). In between *Driver 2* and *Driv3r*, Reflections released a new IP, *Stuntman*, which went on to sell over a million units whilst Glu Mobile released a mobile version of *Driv3r* which exceeded one million paid-for downloads.

Faced with persistent cash shortfalls, Infogrames used Reflections, amongst a number of Atari assets (of whom Reflections was the only named developer), as security for a $50m debt facility in 2003. It then raised $13m through the sale to rival publisher Vivendi of the IPR to an unreleased title, *TimeShift*. It also sold the *Stuntman 2* game and developing studio (Paradigm) to THQ for an additional $9m. Finally, in 2006, it announced it had sold the *Driver* IPR, Reflections Interactive and its other assets for €19m to rival French publisher Ubisoft.

Martin Edmondson's departure from Reflections in late 2004 was controversial and shortly thereafter he brought a constructive dismissal claim against Reflections and Atari who he claimed had unfairly forced his resignation. The settlement agreement which was reached in mid-2005 resulted in Atari paying Edmondson $4.7m, an amount that was intended to compensate for the loss of income from a previously agreed contract extension.

> ***"That Ubisoft was willing to spend €19m to acquire Reflections and Driver speaks volumes about the inherent value in the IP..."***

The studio has now found safer waters in the Ubisoft fold, is delivering new projects including an as yet unnamed new *Driver* game and is growing at a moderate pace compared to Ubisoft's many international studios.

ANALYSIS

In acquiring Reflections prior to its launch of *Driver*, GT Interactive was remarkably prescient and, with the benefit of hindsight, got the company for a good price ($41m in stock, cash and options). The 12 million unit sales generated by *Driver* and *Driver 2* would have generated a minimum six return on its investment acquisition cost. Reflections had certainly produced best-sellers but only one had achieved over two million units for a single iteration.

It could be argued that *Driver* created the market which DMA and Take 2 subsequently exploited to a far greater extent with *Grand Theft Auto 3*. The contrast between Infogrames and Take Two's ability to successfully execute the publishing and marketing of each title shines a harsh light on Infogrames' operational capacity at the time. *Driver* seemed to tap into the same demographic with a similar mix of driving and crime although its main success was on the original PlayStation whilst *GTA3* was a PlayStation 2 console exclusive. The failure of Reflections and Infogrames to build upon the success of the original *Driver* appears to be due to the difficulties that the developer had in making a convincing leap to PlayStation 2 and Xbox, as well as the impatience of cash-strapped Infogrames.

That Ubisoft was willing to spend €19m to acquire what was left of Reflections Interactive (which had already lost its founder and the designer of the original *Driver* games) and the *Driver* IPR speaks volumes for the inherent value it believed is locked in the *Driver* brand. As acquisition values go, €19m is relatively low given the franchise's pedigree. The genre in which *Driver* sits is still hugely popular and many publishers now have a title to attempt to compete with Take 2's *GTA* franchise. Ubisoft, which did not, can now tick this genre's box and has a development methodology and technology base that has not only revived other seemingly moribund brands (such as *Prince of Persia*) but will likely result in the sort of development patience needed to guarantee a successful return for the *Driver* IP in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

- *Driver*'s crime subject matter and reckless street driving potential appealed to the core PlayStation demographic (18-26 years old)
- *Driver* was one of the first 3D games to offer entire cities to explore
- Reflections had a strong pedigree of producing successful products including the *Demolition Derby* titles
- GT Interactive, publisher of the original *Driver* title, believed strongly in its potential, backing its launch with an extensive promotional campaign
- A difficult console transition for the originating studio and poor execution by its parent publisher Infogrames resulted in the sale of the studio and its IP at low value versus its potential

Games Investor Consulting is a specialist games industry consultancy founded in 2003 to provide independent games research and corporate finance consulting to the games industry and financial community. Headed by Rick Gibson and Nick Gibson, GIC is one of the industry's most trusted sources for market intelligence, has generated a number of industry-standard reports, and has consulted on games strategy and research for numerous games and media companies as well as trade and governmental bodies.

THE DEALS

NCSOFT CHATS TO VIVOX
NCsoft has partnered with voice chat technology providers Vivox to enable players to use an NCsoft-branded communication portal to chat across the firm's games, while using features such as voice mail and the ability to communicate via regular phones and text messages.
www.vivox.com

TECHFAITH SIGNS UE3
Chinese firm TechFaith has become the latest licensor of Epic's Unreal Engine 3. The company, which traditionally engages in research and development for mobile phone solutions, has signed up the engine to help it break into the massively multiplayer online game market.
www.techfaithwireless.com

BIOSHOCK AND GORE
Take Two has signed a deal with Universal to produce a film based on *BioShock*, to be directed and produced by *Pirates of the Caribbean* director Gore Verbinski. Ken Levine has apparently been regularly consulted with regarding the project.
www.2kboston.com

SPACETIME CONTINUES-ON
Austin-based Spacetime Studios has acquired the IP for its first universe, *Blackstar*, back from its original publisher NCsoft. The game was dropped earlier this year, but the IP grab has apparently given the team fresh enthusiasm for the concept.
www.spacetimestudios.com

UNREAL DICE
Forthcoming EA DICE parkour action game *Mirror's Edge* will be 'running' on Unreal Engine 3, it's been revealed. DICE won't be using its internal Frostbite engine as it was still in development when the project was started, but it is developing its own custom lighting solution for Epic's engine to achieve a 'very unique art-style'.
www.dice.se

UNREAL DICE
Ubisoft has picked up *Protothea*, a finalist entrant from 2005's Independent Games Festival, for release on Nintendo's WiiWare platform. The game was developed by Argentinian studio Digital Builders.
www.digital-builders.com

DEVELOPER CHART

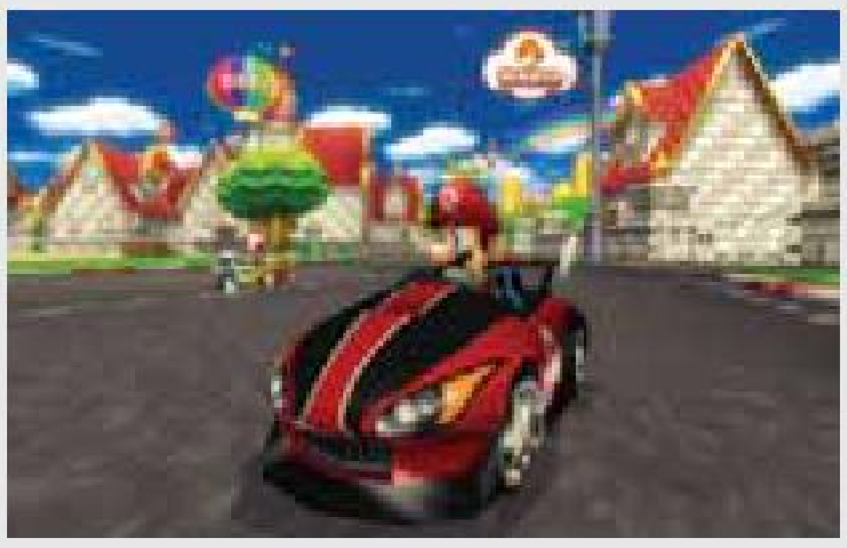
(MARCH 30th – APRIL 26th)

1

↑

LAST MONTH **3**

NINTENDO



BEST SELLING GAME:
MARIO KART WII

It's-a me, Nintendo! Yeah, we knew; it's not like you've really been anywhere. Although, if we're to imagine something getting Nintendo back on *track* towards *pole position*, well, *Mario Kart* would be a suitable *driving* force. But just wait for Rockstar North's blue shell attack next month...

Wii

2

↓

LAST MONTH **1**

UBISOFT (MONTREAL)

BEST SELLING GAME:
TOM CLANCY'S
RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS 2

Even Jack Thompson must admit that Vegas, the global Mecca for sin and indulgence, is a pretty appropriate location for a game. Ubisoft Montreal has received some complaints about the game though, mainly about the realism. Not enough $1 lobster and cheap whores, apparently.

XB360, PS3, PC

3

↓

LAST MONTH **2**

SEGA

BEST SELLING GAME:
MARIO & SONIC
AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

And speaking of whores, look at Princess Peach in that leotard. No, no, we're joking of course: we'd never cast shadow on the Mushroom Kingdom's beloved monarch. Although anyone who's lost a 100 metre race to the irritatingly kidnappable royal has probably said a lot worse.

Wii, DS

4

↑

LAST MONTH **7**

KONAMI

BEST SELLING GAME:
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008

A Wii edition of *Pro Evolution Soccer 2008* is enough momentum to boost Konami into the top five, leapfrogging its *FIFA* rival thanks to some effective (and star-filled) advertising. Who'd have thought that pointing at a football field would have been so fun? Apart from, um, football managers.

PS2, PS3, XB360, DS, PC, WII

5

↑

LAST MONTH **9**

POLYPHONY

BEST SELLING GAME:
GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

Given some time to settle at retail, *GT5 Prologue*'s performance is really shining through, giving Polyphony a well deserved crack at the top five. Over 50 million *Gran Turismo* games have been sold worldwide – and when you consider that, releasing retail demos is suddenly a tempting idea.

PS3

OUR MONTHLY RANKING OF THE WORLD'S STUDIOS BASED ON UK GAMES SALES

CHART KEY	
NEW NEW ENTRY	↑ UP
▨ INDEPENDENT	↓ DOWN
	⇄ NO MOVE

Rank	Move	Last month	Studio / Game	Formats	Country
6	NEW	-	**MONOLITH** CONDEMNED 2	XB360, PS3	🇺🇸
7	↓	6	**INFINITY WARD** CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE	XB360, PS3, PC	🇺🇸
8	↑	30	**CREATIVE ASSEMBLY** VIKING: BATTLE FOR ASGARD	XB360, PS3	🇬🇧
9	↓	5	**EA CANADA** FIFA 08	PS2, PS3, PSP, XB360, WII, PC	🇨🇦
10 ▨	NEW	-	**DIGITAL EXTREMES** DARK SECTOR	XB360, PS3	🇨🇦
11	↓	8	**MAXIS** THE SIMS 2	PC, PS2, PSP	🇺🇸
12 ▨	↑	24	**SUMO DIGITAL** SEGA SUPERSTARS TENNIS	PS3, XB360, PS2, DS, Wii	🇬🇧
13	↑	16	**NEVERSOFT** GUITAR HERO III: LEGENDS OF ROCK	XB360, PS3, Wii	🇺🇸
14	↓	4	**EA MONTREAL** ARMY OF TWO	XB360, PS3	🇨🇦
15	↓	14	**MIDWAY** GAME PARTY	Wii	🇺🇸
16 ▨	↑	18	**COOKING MAMA LIMITED** COOKING MAMA 2	DS	🇯🇵
17 ▨	↑	23	**CAT DADDY** CARNIVAL: FUNFAIR GAMES	Wii	🇺🇸
18	↑	20	**TRAVELLER'S TALES** LEGO STAR WARS: THE COMPLETE SAGA	XB360, PS3, Wii, DS	🇬🇧
19	↓	17	**SONIC TEAM** SONIC AND THE SECRET RINGS	Wii	🇯🇵
20	↓	10	**ROCKSTAR NEW ENGLAND** BULLY: SCHOLARSHIP EDITION	XB360, Wii	🇺🇸

Chart Comment

Quelle surprise – after Ubisoft Montreal's daring displacement of Nintendo last month, forcing the Japanese giant to settle for a shameful second place, the empire strikes back to reclaim its choke hold over our developer chart.

(And if you're sat there, mouth agape, thinking "Whauurrgh? Surely Rockstar North own that spot!" then you'd be right, but this chart covers the March 30th to the April 26th – just a few days shy of *Grand Theft Auto IV*'s release. But worry not: expect Rockstar North to lead next month by a considerable margin. Spoilers!)

Most notable this month is Japan's domination over our top five – the first time in, well, a very long time – and that three of the four Japanese developers have Nintendo to thank for their success. A Wii release of *Pro Evolution Soccer 2008* just days before the charted period helped Konami capitalise on the competing football and Wii fevers gripping the nation of late, and Sega remains relatively steady, buoyed by the continual cash cascade *Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games* – a game exclusive to Nintendo's platforms.

> ***"Expect Rockstar North to lead next month by a big margin…"***

We're running out of space, but we'd be remiss if we also didn't mention Sumo Digital's 12 place climb on the back of Sega IP love-in *Sega Superstars Tennis*. Double remiss, in fact, because it'd mean I couldn't mention how limitless my joy is to finally see Ulala in a new title. Now just bring some swingin' sixties jazz with you and the world will be ours.

Ed Fear
ed.fear@intentmedia.co.uk

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One night in Paris

Later this month, the French GDC ups sticks from Lyon to try its hand at an event in the country's capital. Big names are signed to host sessions throughout the two-day event; **Develop** runs through the highlights…

PARIS GDC 2008

When: June 23rd & 24th, 2008
Where: Coeur Défense, Paris, France
Web: www.parisgdc.com

SESSIONS – EDITOR'S PICKS

KEYNOTE: Little Big Planet, Little Team, Big Ideas
Media Molecule founders Mark Healey and Alex Evans will address the breadth of ways in which game developers can incorporate creativity into their designs. From god-games and sim-games to full-on modding, they will discuss the past, present, and future of user-generated content.

KEYNOTE: In the Eye of the Blizzard: a Keynote Q&A with Rob Pardo
GDC Events executive director Jamil Moledina interviews Pardo on his inspirations, challenges, and next steps at Blizzard. The discussion is informed by Blizzard's lessons learned, resources unlocked by its success, and the raw talent in evidence in the company's development team. Moledina will also include questions submitted online via the myGDC forums.

KEYNOTE: Scenes from *Battlefield*: The Past and Future of the Core and Casual
Ben Cousins, *Battlefield Heroes*' project lead, talks about the business and consumer trends that lead to the creation of this new service, and in his role as the executive producer for the *Battlefield* franchise he shares his thoughts on the future crossover of core and casual gamers and the supposed 'death' of the PC as a gaming platform.

A *Portal* Post-Mortem: Integrating Writing and Design
GAME DESIGN TRACK
A repeat of her massively popular GDC session, Valve level designer Kim Swift examines the iterative process behind integrating story and gameplay to create a satisfying, seamless experience, discussing how they approached the symbiotic relationship between the story and gameplay that made *Portal* successful.

Designing a game for multi-core platforms: pitfalls & performance tuning
PROGRAMMING / CODING TRACK
Lionel Lemarie, of SCEE's research & development team, will discuss multi-core programming on multiple platforms. Using code inspired by the PlayStation 3 platform, he will offer ideas of good practice to get code running efficiently on PC and Xbox 360, highlighting the hurdles he had to jump over and point out the challenges yet to overcome. A real-time on-screen profiler will be used throughout the presentation to illustrate a game that is running efficiently in theory but not in practice.

Level Design Challenges in *Crysis*: The Long Journey to Open Worlds
VISUAL ARTS TRACK
Sten Huebler, lead designer at Crytek, will deliver an insight into the challenges of creating levels in parallel to developing an engine, the process of restructuring the level design team to keep up with the game's growing complexity, and the long journey of delivering compelling gameplay in a variety of unique environments, including zero gravity.

Digital Distribution: what is really happening, and how does it impact your studio?
BUSINESS / MANAGEMENT TRACK
This lecture, helmed by game lawyer Vincent Scheurer, considers the reality and the future of the digital distribution of games directly to consumers. It addresses the economics and the commercial realities of digital downloads for PC, console, casual, episodic and mobile games. The lecture pays particular attention to the impact of digital distribution on small and large independent development studios.

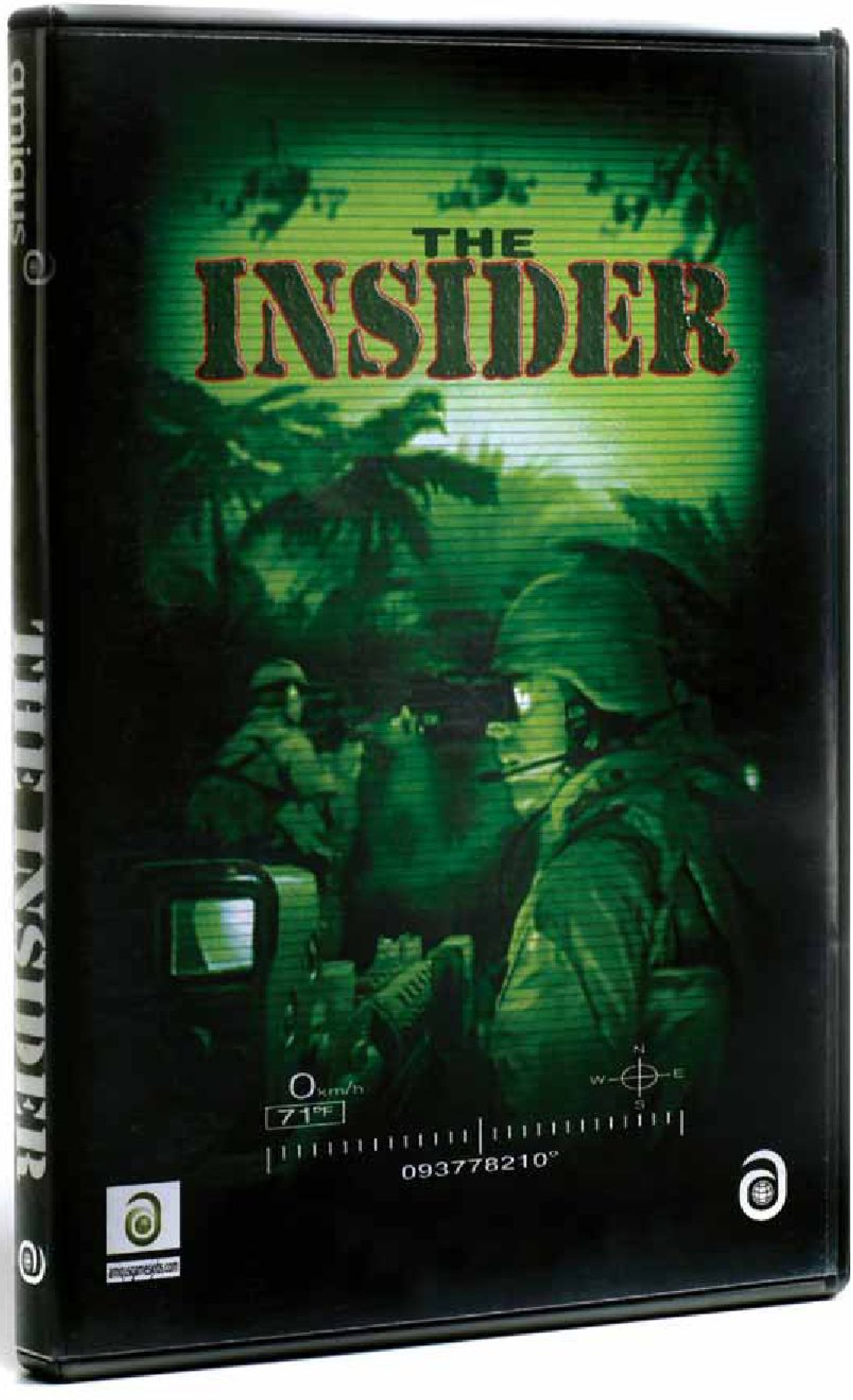
Ultimate Graphics Performance for DirectX 10 Hardware
PROGRAMMING / CODING TRACK
Getting the ultimate graphics performance from DirectX 10 and the latest generation hardware can be an exciting and demanding challenge, so AMD European Developer Relations bod Nicolas Thibieroz uses his extensive experience of recent games technology to show some of the key pivotal decisions which can lead to ultimate graphics performance.

Keep Calm and Carry On: The History of *BioShock*
GAME DESIGN TRACK
2K Boston technical director Chris Kline provides an overview of the many conceptual, technical, production and marketing challenges that were overcome during BioShock's five-year development history. Footage of several early prototypes will be shown alongside a discussion of the many difficulties encountered, mistakes made, and lessons learned during the project's various incarnations.

***SingStar*: The Game Factory**
PRODUCTION TRACK
How does one team manage to ship 32 SKUs in a year? By being Sony's SingStar team, and having a dedicated approach to targeted localised releases. In this talk, SingStar senior producer Tamsin Lucas talks about the processes in place at the Sony London Studio and how it manages to grapple with such a complex pipeline, one that spans not only multiple platforms but also disc-based and electronically-distributed content.

The Right Tools for the Write Job
GAME DESIGN TRACK
Great dialog needs great writers, but in the games industry you need great tools to support your writers, tools that allow your writers to share content across the project. How does dialog get translated into scripts for the VO actors? How do your plots and missions get turned in to gameplay? How does an idea for a cutscene become a reality? What about localisation? This session, by Bioware's Mac Walters, will take a close look at the tools and systems used at BioWare to create truly collaborative writing.

Training as a Productivity Multiplier
BUSINESS / MANAGEMENT TRACK
In this talk, Blitz's art manager John Nash explains how failure to acknowledge and embrace training in the development environment is tantamount to long-term strategic suicide. This presentation will demystify training by presenting some hard-learnt facts and methodologies that will help you to unleash the hidden effectiveness of your development teams that will result in higher productivity, better quality and a healthier bottom line.



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GAMES

Qantm's Mechanics

It's one of the newest faces on the education scene – but as a private educator, what can Qantm offer that the country's Universities can't? **Ed Fear** investigates…

Qantm may be a new name here in the UK, but it's actually got a longer history – and is part of a greater network – than may be initially apparent.

Originally established in Brisbane, Australia in 1996, the Qantm project was a collaboration between six universities who pooled their resources to create a specialist training facility for graphics and 3D games. The collective fell on financial hard times in 2004, however, and were soon bought out by the SAE institute, a multimedia and music production network of schools currently comprising of 46 centres in 21 countries across the world. A re-jig, relaunch and several Australian training awards later, the school started its global assault, now featuring facilities in Munich, Berlin, Amsterdam, Melbourne, Singapore, Dubai and a plush new centre in Islington, London.

In terms of offerings, Qantm's courses can be divided into three levels: individual modules, one year Qantm-certified diploma courses and two-year BA and BSc degree programmes validated by the University of Middlesex – with a further masters year available through its relationship with SAE. The modules are sold individually in order to appeal to industry, says Qantm marketing man Nic Oliver.

"It's aimed at the corporate side, for updating and fine-tuning skills," he explains. "So, for example, if someone's in the web industry as a website coder, what they could then do is come in and learn the latest CSS 3 or ActionScript 3.0 – or, for a game specific example, XNA."

Of course, those modules can, if desired, be built up towards one of the other awards. But the thing that Qantm prides itself on most is its flexibility to adapt to changing industry needs, something that it thinks traditional University courses find a much harder process.

Says Oliver: "Mainstream universities have a very inherent problem with updating their curriculum, because they have to go through updated validation processes and such that can take uo to three years. But our course structure, the way we run things, means that if something new is released tomorrow we could have it in our course in a matter of weeks."

That's not to say that Qantm thinks it's better than all University courses – Oliver admits that there are a selection of good degrees and masters courses out there, in particular Hull's masters degree – but the problem is the many other courses that have sprouted up recently.

"A lot of Universities seem to be just renaming current courses – like computer science or media courses. They just add the 'game' in the title," he warns. "But I think there are very good courses out there, and the Skillset academy is starting to work on that."

> ***"Mainstream universities have an inherent problem with updating their curriculum…"***
>
> ***Nic Oliver, Qantm***

Thinking along those lines, though, brings about the question of how exactly Qantm is in a better position in terms of providing a rounded education, especially seeing as it's a private institution. The answer, it says, is in its academic board. Made up of key names in the UK development industry (the individual names of which are sadly still unannounced at the time *Develop* went to press), it can make sure that the courses – from individual modules through to full blown degrees – are fully relevant with what the development industry needs.

It's all well and good saying all of this, of course, but Qantm knows that the only way it can really show people what it can offer is by getting them in there, and to that extent it offers free workshops on a regular basis to get people in the door, but to also spur people into wanting to study 3D and games.

"There's a lot of people that miss out on the opportunity to do this kind of course at school these days, because schools aren't well enough equipped to teach 3D and games effectively," says Oliver. "Simultaneously I think they don't think it's important enough to be teaching these kinds of skills. So by providing workshops, anyone from 14 through to 110 can come in and get an idea of this sort of thing, and it's a good way to build up their skills when they're still studying or working."

In fact, the college is so determined to get young people thinking about studying these fields that it's already working with schools to teach these workshops on-site, to "introduce it into the curriculum."

And the future? Oliver says more courses, but still sticking with the digital media sphere. The next course that it's to launch is the Game Audio Production programme, which Oliver explains came about through observing the industry, which is how the school will continue to develop its offerings. "We've taken that advice on board and produced the course based on what they think is important. We'll keep up with what the industry needs."

OPEN DAYS

A listing of all the open days run by universities currently offering games development-related courses…

University of Abertay Dundee	- October 15th
Aberystwyth	- July 2nd, October 15th
Anglia Ruskin	- October 11th, November 22nd
Bedford	- July 5th
Birmingham City University	- June 20th & 21st, August 16th, August 20th, October 3rd & 4th
University of Bolton	- June 14th, August 16th & 17th
University of Bradford	- July 5th, October 4th
Brighton	- October 18th
Bournemouth University	- June 21st
Buckinghamshire New University	- June 18th
Cardiff Metropolitan University	- June 28th
University of Central Lancashire	- June 14th
City University London	- June 28th
Coventry University	- June 21st, October 11th, October 25th
De Montford University	- June 27th, July 9th
University of Derby	- October 11th, October 31st, November 14th, November 29th
University of East London	- June 14th, September 3rd, October 15th
University of Essex	- June 21st, September 20th, October 29th
University of Glamorgan	- July 9th, September 18th, October 25th, November 15th
University of Greenwich	- July 5th, August 16th, August 21st, September 13th, Oct 18th
University of Hertfordshire	- June 14th, October 4th & 5th
University of Huddersfield	- June 18th, Sept 20th, Oct 29th
University of Hull	- October 4th
Hull College	- June 21st
Kingston University	- June 18th, October 4th, October 18th, Feb 21st '09, Mar 28th '09
Leeds Met	- Jul 5th, Septr 27th, Sept 28th
University of Lincoln	- July 9th, September 27th, October 18th, November 15th, January 17th 2009, July 8th 2009
Liverpool John Moores University	- July 2nd
London Metropolitan University	- June 24th
Manchester Metropolitan University	- June 18th
Middlesex University	- September 13th
Newcastle University	- June 25th, September 27th
Northumbria University	- June 25th, October 11th
Nottingham Trent University	- July 9th, Sept 20th, October 18th
University of Plymouth	- Jun 18th, Oct 18th, Jun 17th 2009
Plymouth College of Art and Design	- September 27th, November 19th, Jan 24th 2009, Feb 25th 2009
University of Portsmouth	- July 9th, September 17th, October 15th & 25th, Nov 12th
Queen's University Belfast	- September 11th & 12th
Sheffield Hallam University	- Jun 22nd, Oct 5th, Oct 18th & 19th
Southampton Solent University	- October 15th, 24th & 25th, November 14th & 15th
Staffordshire University	- Jun 25th, Aug 16th & 21st, Sept 27th, Oct 19th, Nov 15th
University Campus Suffolk	- July 25th
University of Teesside	- Jun 19th & 21st, Oct 11th & 15th
University of the Arts London	- July 4th, 9th & 11th
University of Westminster	- October 18th
University of the West of England	- October 11th, November 22nd
University of Wolverhampton	- June 21st, August 16th, September 16th, November 8th

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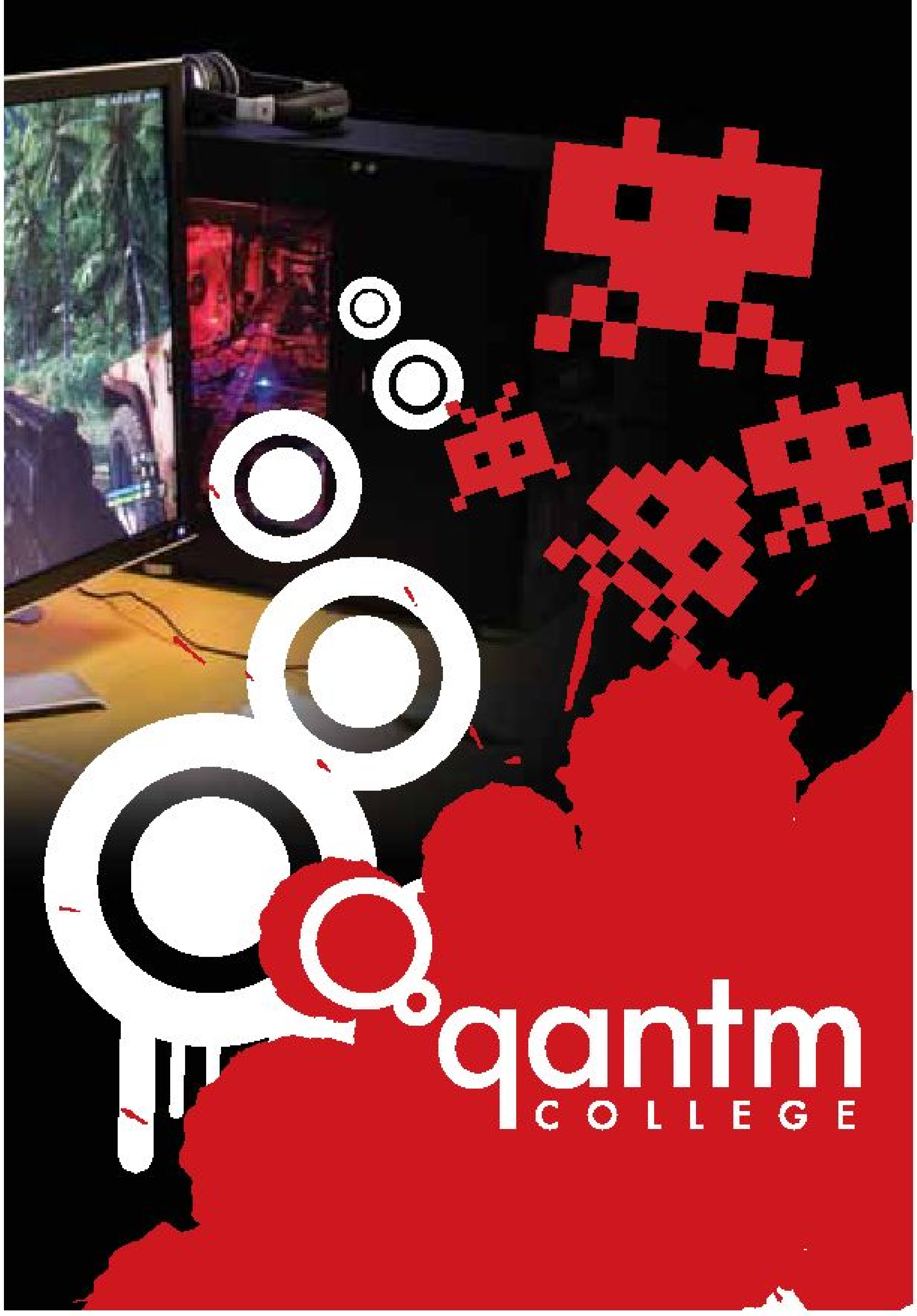

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BETA

DEVELOPMENT FEATURES, INTERVIEWS, ESSAYS & MORE

"We remember when the UK was leading the world..."
Christine Burgess-Quémard, Ubisoft, p49

Inside the Games Up campaign
p40

Does GTA deserve wider recognition?
p45

Ubisoft's studio boss interviewed
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BRIGHTON PIER

Bright 'n' early

We offer up a taster of the must-see sessions at next month's Develop conference, p36

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12 things you in Brighton

The Develop conference and expo returns for to Brighton for its third year next month. Here, we run through the key sessions and events from the three-day event that you just can't miss…

Taking place from July 29th to July 31st, next month's Develop conference and expo is shaping up to be the best yet.

Last year, over 1,200 attended the event and look set to return for 2008. The conference this year takes four key themes – Capitalise, Specialise, Inspire and Enjoy – across its Design, Production, Coding, Business, Art & Animation, Audio and World Vision tracks.

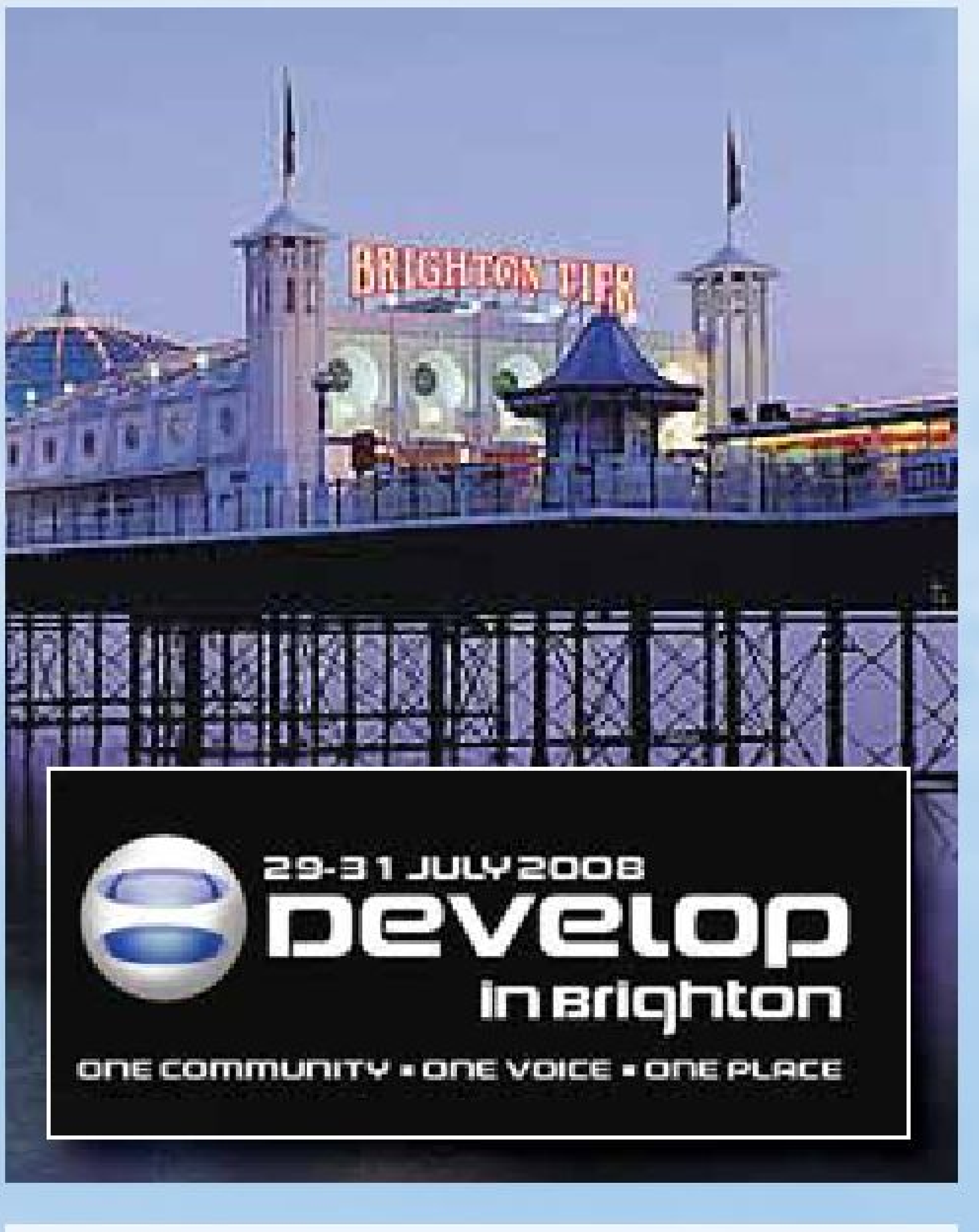
Some of the best recently-released games, including *LostWinds*, *Halo 3*, *Uncharted*, *Patapon*, and *Echochrome* will be explored in dedicated sessions, as will key issue's facing developers including the broadening games market, making games for children, and the commercial pressures that lead to studio acquisitions. Dedicated Audio and Online day-long tracks will provide illuminating looks at fast-developing areas of games development.

And that's not all – the 12 different things we've featured here will of course be worth scheduling your time around, but there are more sessions confirmed and still to be named. For the latest details head to **www.develop-conference.com**

1 > PATAPON PROBED

The conference has scored two Japanese Sony speaker coups for this year's event.

The first examines rhythm action PSP game *Patapon*. Atsushi Ii, the director of Japanese studio Pyramid, will take to the stage with Junichi Yoshizawa, associate producer at SCE Worldwide Japan Studio to present insight into the development of the game.



2 > THE ONLINE DAY

A special set of sessions have been added to the conference bill which examine the various developments in the online gaming space.

Some of the sessions come from key online studios:

Linden Labs: About 256,000 esidents of Second Life have written 2.5 billion lines of code and run 30 million scripts 24/7 in a continuous 3D landscape that's twice the size of Montreal. In his talk 'I'd Like To Teach The World To Code' Jim Purbrick discusses the challenges inherent in user created behaviours and looks at how to overcome them.

CCP: There's no denying that making online games creates unprecendented development demands. Moussa Khan looks at how CCP has tackled the challenge of creating persistent worlds, explains why the studio's *EVE Online* tried to break with tradition for its gameworld and offers possible solutions for dealing with MMO development problems.

Jagex: Online games are rife with gold-farmer and real-world trading of in-game objects. Looking at the best and worst examples from the world's MMOs, *RuneScape*'s Imre Jele looks at how this can ruin gameplay experience, and what developers can do to tackle a problem that can unbalance even the best MMOs.

3 > DAVID BRABEN'S DESIGN KEYNOTE

Frontier Developments founder David Braben will provide the design track's keynote session. He tells us that the talk will look at "the wide range of fantastic opportunities that are now available" typified by the contrasting games made at Frontier such as *The Outsider* and *LostWinds*, and how it adds up to "a fantastic time for games development".

Adds Braben: "The talk will look at the approach we took to bringing LostWinds to market, and what we have learnt from this process."

4 > 'WHY WE SOLD OUR STUDIO – AND WHY WE DIDN'T'

In this candid panel discussion chaired by *Develop* editor Michael French, three of the top UK developers explore the pressures and opportunities that can lead to agreeing to a studio's acquisition, weighing up the sides of the 'sell up or stay free' argument.

Sarah Chudley of Bizarre Creations explains why the Liverpool-based company fell for the charms of Activision, while Ian Baverstock, CEO of multi-site Kuju makes the case for remaining independent. Paul Wedgwood, founder of Splash Damage, rounds out the discussion, offering the voice of a smaller, successful independent that still manages to do great business.

After many years in development, both should have an idea about the potential pitfalls in the others' strategy.

can't miss next month…

5 > BUNGIE'S CODING KEYNOTE

In a session entitled (deep breath) '*Halo* AI Retrospective: Eight Years of Work on 30 Seconds of Fun' Bungie's Damian Isla, a senior engineer who was AI lead prrogrammer on both *Halo 2* and *Halo 3* offers up an examination of the technical detail in producing two of the biggest grossing video games off all time. The session is the keynote for the entire coding track at the conference.

6 > WHAT CHILDREN CAN TEACH DEVELOPERS

Hosted by Traveller's Tales' Jonathan Smith, this session draws upon video interviews with a range of children, and case studies from the studio's work on its various LEGO games, to look at what needs to be done to create gaming experiences for kids that are challenging and fulfiling as well as fun.

7 > THE DEVELOP AWARDS

The conference's key evening event is the Develop Industry Excellence Awards. 18 different prizes will be awarded this year, recognising achievements across all areas of the development sector, from the best European-made new IP of the last year through to the best Creative Outsourcing and Services firms. You can check out the nominees on pages 6 and seven of this issue. Contact Jodie.Holdway@bhpr.co.uk on details on how to attend.

8 > EXPLORING UNCHARTED'S TERRITORY

The production track also has a dedicated keynote talk, this one from Naughty Dog's Richard Lemarchand. The session titled 'Working Hard and Having Fun: How Naughty Dog Made *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*' will do just that, providing an inside look at how one of the better PS3 titles came into being.

9 > DOLBY SPEAKS

A scoop for the Develop conference's audio track: in a session from Paul Boustead, director or Interactive Voice Technology in Dolby Australia's Online Game Technology Group, this session will explore Dolby's new voice solution for online games that delivers a clear, intelligible, realistic experience.

10 > A RARE GLIMPSE

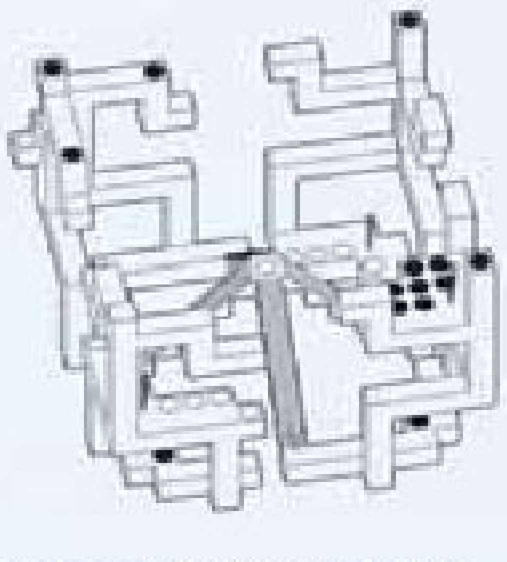
Another audio exclusive for the Develop conference audio track. In the session 'Welcome To Our World 2008', members of Rare's award-winning audio team (specifically: Robin Beanland, Grant Kirkhope, Dave Wise and Steve Burke) discuss their overall approach to creating videogame music, sound and dialogue covering audio design, scheduling and resourcing, technical implementation, realising creativity and delivering humour effectively – and how that all aided games like *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, *Donkey Kong Country*, *Banjo Kajooie* and *Kameo*.

11 > DEVELOP MOBILE & GAMES:EDU

Don't forget that while the main conference and expo takes place on July 30th and July 31st, the event is proceeded by two day-long conferences looking at mobile gaming and games education on July 29th.

Games:Edu lights a spark under the debate over the current and future education needs of the gaming community. Develop Mobile is split into two tracks for 2008, Business and Development, to examine the multitude of opportunities open to mobile developers.

12 > ECHOCHROME EXAMINED



The second of the conference's two key Japanese sessions turns to inspired puzzler *Echochrome*. JSPS/Kyushu University's Jun Fujiki and Tatsuya Suzuki, director of the game at SCE Worldwide Japan Studio, will be on hand to examine how the game was produced.

deve

INDUSTRY EXCEL

Categories

CREATIVITY
- Best New IP
- Best Use of a Licence
- Visual Arts
- Audio Accomplishment
- Publishing Hero

TECHNOLOGY & SERVICES
- Tools Provider
- Technical Innovation
- Services and Outsourcing
- Recruitment Company
- Games:Edu New Talent Award

STUDIOS
- Best New UK/European Studio
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Up, Yours

Rick Gibson, a member of the Games Up steering committee, runs through the reasoning behind the new campaign's call for better support from the UK Government and how it can help your games business…

In October 2007, Phil Harrison hosted a meeting of some of the UK's largest studios to discuss how to counter the negative perception of the industry in the media and the Houses of Parliament and inaction in Government. A handful of meetings with government ministers had taken place during the 2007 London Games Festival to discuss the competitiveness of the UK studio industry, particularly with regards to the impact of government aid overseas. GIC's Playing for Keeps reported that in 2006 the UK was pushed from third to fourth place in the global rankings by Canada, and that Canada, having decimated the French development industry, was now targeting the UK. That long term threat to the UK industry has immediate consequences, but the ministers the industry met – Stephen Timms, Margaret Hodge and Digby Jones – claimed the industry fails to speak with one voice, with one even saying that he was unaware that games was a 'serious' industry.

To solve this issue, some of the UK's largest studios came together to fund a campaign to educate MPs, policy-makers and mainstream media about how important the industry is, and what it offers UK PLC.

Key to solving the single voice problem was the involvement of both trade bodies. ELSPA and Tiga quickly came together to draft the key policies of the campaign, which centre on the key issues of costs and skills. The campaign went on to recruit some of the UK's biggest studios, including some of the large non-affiliated studios like Frontier and Real Time Worlds. In total, Games Up is backed by studios and trade bodies representing more than 75 per cent of UK games development, publishing and service companies.

Games Up is not a new trade body; it's a short term campaign that runs in parallel with the trade bodies' day-to-day PR and lobbying activities. The campaign will run until August, and possibly to the end of 2008, but no longer. The sponsoring companies nominated a steering group made up of SCEE, Frontier, GIC, ELSPA and TIGA to manage and report back on the campaign's activities. The steering group ran a quick pitch process and nominated a pair of mainstream agencies – Precise Public Affairs and 3 Monkeys PR – to deliver the campaign. GIC was also tasked with providing background data and overall campaign administration.

The campaign will endeavour to balance the threat of heavy overseas competition with the massive opportunity that a buoyant, growing UK games development industry provides. The organisers are realistic in assuming that it won't immediately deliver tax breaks or solve the skills shortage overnight. By targeting mainstream media and MPs, the campaign will tackle some barriers that a call for more substantial measures to support the industry will face.

The campaign responded quickly to the gathering news story around the US state Georgia's introduction of a games production tax credit and launched in mainstream media and to policy makers on May 26th, with the first pieces running in the *Mail on Sunday* and the *Financial Times*.

Join up! If you would like to contribute to the campaign, either by hosting an MP visit or financially, please contact us: *rick@gamesinvestor.com.*

Snapshot of the Games Up campaign

Main targets: Backbench MPs and policy makers, and the mainstream media.

Main objective: Educate policy makers and the media about UK games development so that a more informed debate about substantial support can take place.

Policies: Long-term goals are production tax breaks and skills, with a focus on what the industry can give back to the UK, as well as receive from Government.

Methodology: National media campaign starting on June 8th and a lobbying campaign consisting of a constituency MP campaign plus a series of parliamentary events before and after the summer recess.

Delivery: A pair of experienced non-games agencies (a lobbying company Precise Public Affairs and a PR firm 3 Monkeys) have been contracted to deliver the campaign. Games Investor Consulting has gathered a large amount of background data for media and MP, Treasury and UKTI briefings.

Management: The agencies' work is being managed day-to-day by a steering group consisting of SCEE, Frontier, GIC, TIGA and ELSPA. The trade bodies and key non-affiliated independents have agreed the campaign's policies so we can speak with one voice about costs and skills.

Campaign contributors: Key sponsors are SCEE, Microsoft Games Studios, Activision/Bizarre Creations, Electronic Arts, Take Two, Codemasters, Eidos, Frontier, NCsoft, Real Time Worlds, Reflections Ubisoft, Blitz, Sports Interactive, Relentless and Exient.

KEY MESSAGES OF THE CAMPAIGN

There are three main issues which concern members of the video games industry: world-class status, high costs and skills shortages.

WORLD-CLASS STATUS

UK games are a force for good – economically, culturally and socially

- The UK is a world-class centre for games development, and has been the third biggest selling games development territory for most of the last 25 years – until 2006.
- UK studios have generated more than £14 billion in global sales since the industry began.
- With average salaries of more than £30,000, this is a classic knowledge economy. The average British games studio employee generated more than £124,000 in revenue worldwide in 2007.
- 10,000 staff in 200 studios country-wide created games that are projected to sell nearly £4bn between 2006 and 2008, generating £1.4bn of expenditure on British jobs.
- We've created some of the world's most successful games and revolutionised gaming by attracting a wider audience.
- Games are played by 60 per cent of the UK population, and we're a responsible industry; only three per cent of games are rated 18.
- Games can be good for you – mentally, physically and socially.
- Games are the future: six to 15 year-olds regularly choose games over TV, internet and film.

The UK's world-class studio sector is under threat

- Making games in the UK is more expensive than every competitor territory.
- Foreign subsidies, tax credits and better access to finance are diverting investment from the UK.
- Skills shortages are hampering growth for most studios.
- Despite being a UK success story, there is negative perception in mainstream media and Parliament.
- UK games fell to fourth place globally in 2007, and will slide further in 2009.
- Many UK games studios are growing faster in overseas subsidiaries than in their UK head offices and some are relocating altogether to subsidised territories.

CONCLUSION: Government and the industry should join forces to promote the UK development industry

Via Games Up the industry has come together to speak with one voice to Government and policy makers about what we offer and what we need from government.

SKILLS

THE PROBLEM: Skills shortages

- Studios face a worsening recruitment crisis in the UK.
- There have been 15 per cent fewer science graduates over the last decade, and falling numbers of computer science graduates - less than 20 per cent of games graduates get industry jobs because courses are not fit for purpose.
- 2006 Skillset accreditation – only four out of 81 courses are accredited by Skillset but their graduates are two and a half times as likely to get games jobs.

THE SOLUTION: collaboration on education

- A Government-assisted programme which enables undergraduates studying maths, physics and computer science to get work experience in real games studios.
- An increase in the supply of computer science and mathematics graduates without sacrificing quality.
- More courses recruited to Skillset's accreditation scheme.
- Centres of Excellence in video games, similar to the Film School, to improve standards in education, training and qualifications.

HOW INDUSTRY WILL HELP: education growth and engagement

- Job creation – The industry will need to recruit at least 1,700 more staff in the next five years.
- Liaison with education – We will continue to work with universities to improve courses and prepare students for real world jobs using internships.
- Promoting science – We can use the appeal of video gaming to help government promote computer science, physics and mathematics in schools and universities.
- Engagement on Games Schools – The industry will work with Government on its recommendation to establish Centres of Excellence for Computer Games.

COSTS

THE PROBLEM: High costs and low government assistance will lead to job losses and falling investment

- Major competitor territories offer substantial industry-specific assistance but UK studios get little support.
- Canada, France, Australia and US offer either games-specific tax credits, subsidies or higher access to finance, and are winning more inward investment.
- The UK is struggling to compete on uneven international playing fields and our home-grown talent is being targeted and wooed by competitor countries.
- Without substantial support, the UK studio sector will shrink, resulting in 1,700 jobs losses and more than £180m of falling investment in UK studios.
- This shrinkage is already starting to cause loss of 'critical mass' with key industry-supporting businesses such as testing moving offshore.

THE SOLUTION: EU-approved production tax credits

- A games production tax credit for games that pass the cultural test, on the same EU-approved grounds as the French games production tax credit (20 per cent).
- Maximise the number of games businesses that can benefit from the R&D tax credit scheme.
- Create an environment for a new generation of entrepreneurial studios to find finance, start-up and create more world-class games.

HOW INDUSTRY WILL HELP: growth and new investment

- With a production tax credit, the industry expects to invest an additional £220m over five years in British jobs.
- With a tax credit, staff numbers will rise to a total of 11,500 in five years.
- Drive new games, start-new studio start-ups and new inward investment into the UK.

Key to the Games Up campaign is reminding the media and Parliamentarians of the overall strength of the UK games market…

Execs sound off

Well-known representatives from the campaign's steering committee are putting forward the case for key issues of cost, tax breaks, education, and the cultural worth of the industry…

COST

"The industry is one of the jewels in Britain's global business crown and UK games studios are significant contributors to the UK economy. Between 2006 and 2008, UK studios will have invested nearly £1.4 billion in 10,000 jobs in the UK to create games grossing £4bn worldwide. But we're struggling to compete on uneven international playing fields. Higher costs, lower access to finance and lower state assistance pose a major threat to our industry. We should not let this competitive advantage and such an amazing talent pool slip through our fingers."

Ian Livingstone, Creative Director, Eidos

TAX BREAKS

"With a 20 per cent production tax credit – like that approved by the EU and found in France – we could create many new, high value jobs, millions of pounds in new investment, and promote closer collaboration between industry and education. Without real measures to turn the tide, we'll see our best people follow the money overseas to where governments are more willing to invest in the future. A great British industry could become a dead man walking, just like the British film industry before Government gave it a tax credit. We must act now if the UK games industry is to remain a global leader."

Richard Wilson, CEO of Tiga

EDUCATION

"In recent years, the industry could have grown so much faster if we had access to larger numbers of better trained recruits. It's vital that we tackle the skills shortage to preserve our ability to make global hit games. We back the Government's call for Centres of Excellence for video games and more Skillset accredited courses in universities which would help ensure that the British industry can continue to create a new generation of world-class games creators."

Jamie MacDonald, Vice President at Sony Computer Entertainment World Wide Studios Europe

CULTURE & ECONOMY

"This growing global industry already gives so much back - not just in tax, but also in education. We can help motivate children and teenagers to learn subjects like maths, physics and computer science - subjects in which standards and numbers are falling dramatically. We want to work with universities in a structured way to improve the content and standard of courses so that graduates emerge ready for real world jobs, not just in our industry, but in other industries that also benefit the country. We compete with the banking sector for programmers and the film industry for artists and animators. But in our industry alone we need at least 1,700 more staff over the next five years to maintain our global position. We ought to be at the vanguard of this global phenomenon, not moving studios abroad where the industry is booming."

David Braben, Chairman of Frontier Developments

FAST FACTS ABOUT THE UK GAMES DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

WHO PLAYS GAMES IN THE UK?

- There are at least 26.5 million interactive gamers in the UK.
- The average age of a gamer is 28 years old.
- In recent years there has been significant growth in the number of older gamers playing on accessible platforms like Sony's PlayStation 2 and Nintendo's Wii.
- 48 per cent of gamers are female.
- Only three per cent of games sold in the UK in 2007 had a mature/18+ rating. Over half of games sold were appropriate for under seven year olds.
- Six to 15 year olds say games are their favourite entertainment medium.

UK-MADE GAMES ON THE WORLD STAGE

- The global games software market was worth nearly £18bn in 2007 and and is expected to experience a compound annual growth rate of more than 9 per cent per annum over next five years, making it the third fastest growing media segment after TV and online advertising.
- The UK has been the third largest producer of games in the world for most of the last two decades. In 2006 and 2007, the UK lost this long-held position to Canada, where local and national governments alike have been providing generous and extensive support specific to the games industry.
- In 2007, the UK games software market (as opposed to the games development market) recorded a remarkable 26 per cent growth at retail to reach a record value of £1.7 billion.
- From 2006 to 2008, UK-made games are projected to make £4bn globally.

UK STUDIOS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE UK ECONOMY

- UK-based games studios spent nearly half a billion pounds in the UK in 2007, with 280 companies employing 10,000 creative staff, whose numbers are growing by four per cent per annum.
- The games industry has been a substantial net contributor to the UK's economy – one of few in the entertainment sector adding nearly £200m to the UK's balance of trade in 2003, and is expected to remain a net contributor.
- The UK games industry as a whole employs more than 22,000 people in studios, publishing and retail positions.

GAMES VERSUS OTHER MEDIA

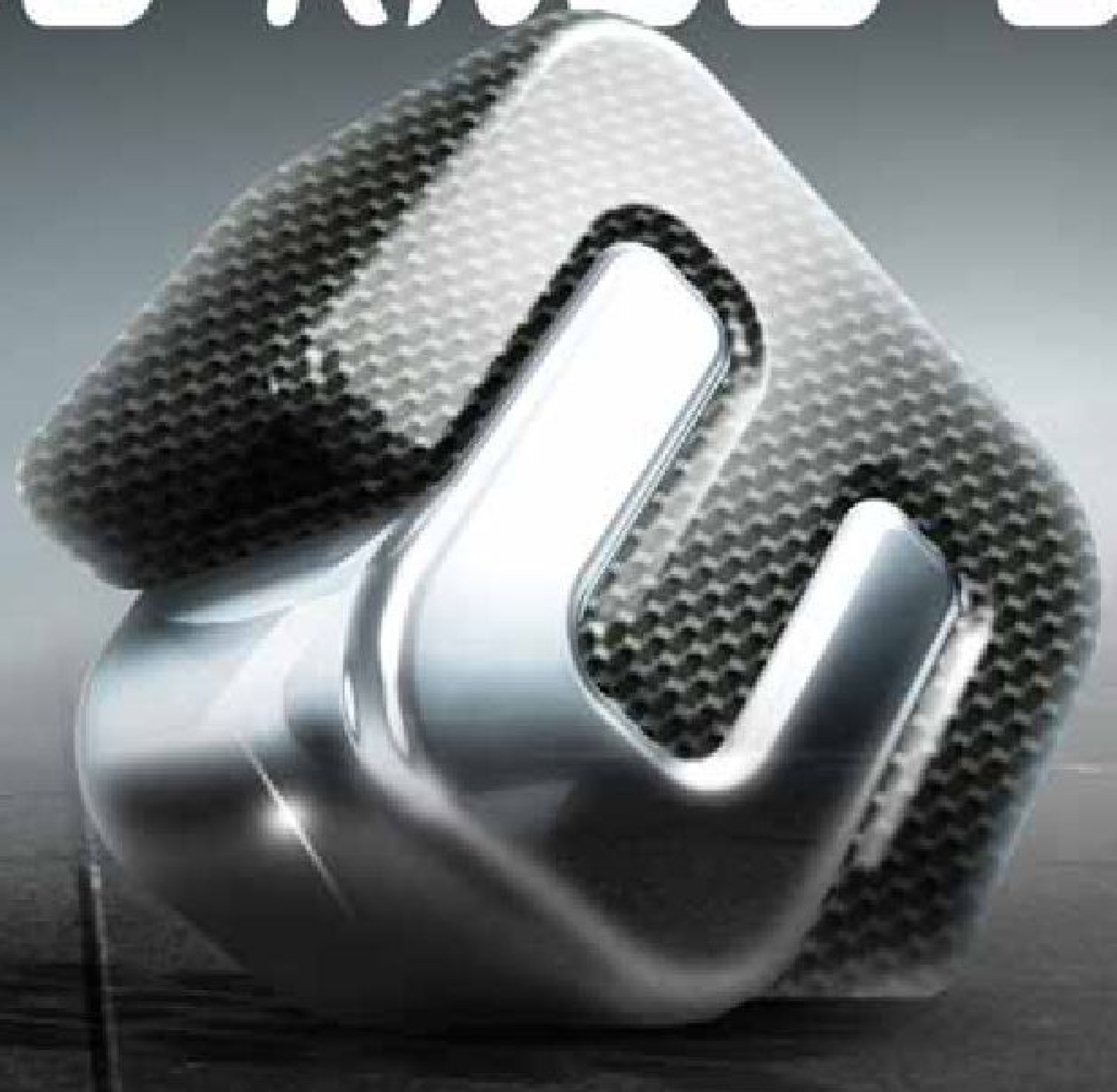
- The average worker in a UK games studio generated more than twice as much revenue globally as the average worker in a UK film studio in 2007.
- The *GTA* series has sold more than 70 million units worldwide, and generated more than £1.75bn at retail.
- *GTA IV* easily overtook the biggest ever film launch, *Pirates of the Caribbean* in 2007, which took £200m in its opening week.
- *GTA IV* took £150m on its first day, five times more than the biggest opening day for a film, which was *Spider-Man 3* in 2007 that made £30m.

Sources: *GIC; Screen Digest; BBC State of Play, 2006; ELSPA / Video Standards Council; Exuberant Youth report from DTI/Spectrum; Playing for Keeps UKTI/BERR/GIC 2007; ELSPA; PWC; UK Film Council; Take Two; Variety*

CASE STUDY: HOW QUEBEC INVESTED IN GAMES TO CREATE THE WORLD'S THIRD LARGEST GAMES CENTRE

The Quebec government decided to attract the key knowledge economy industry of games to its shores in late 1990s. In the past four years, Montreal has invested £500m in tax credits to generate an estimated £1.5bn in inward investment by global games firms. Quebec is now home to the world's two largest studios – EA and Ubisoft. This is how Quebec persuaded Ubisoft to locate a 3,000-man studio in Montreal.

- Quebec offered a 37.5 per cent tax rebates on games development salaries, amongst a range of other incentives including a three year income tax holiday for emigrating foreign specialists.
- Quebec negotiated $1.1bn in investment from Ubisoft, from which the Government rebated $400m in tax credits and awarded an additional $50m in grants.
- Ubisoft built a graduate school to generate 2,000 new jobs over five years, investing $16m vs. Quebec Government's $5m.
- Quebec's studio staff numbers have grown 33 per cent in two years (vs. 8 per cent in UK), with an additional 25 per cent growth projected for next two years (vs. 3 per cent decline in UK).



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THE SUNDAY TIMES 100 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR 2008

WHAT ROLE WILL YOU PLAY?

Knights of the sandbox city

You might be sick of reading about it and maybe even playing it, but GTA IV still deserves more notice from the top, argues **Owain Bennallack**…

Rockstar founders Sam and Dan Houser have faced many challenges over the years. They've fought the law, Jack Thompson, and the British tabloids. With their comrades at Edinburgh's Rockstar North they've upped the ante with each successive *GTA*, creating landmark games with ever more wit, élan, action and emotion. By doing barely any publicity, they make it look effortless. They've broken sales records. They've made everyone else look bad.

But can they see off the British establishment?

I don't mean the 'dark forces' that the Queen was said to have warned Diana about. I mean the very public way in which the establishment eventually co-opts any superstar bad boys who haven't died in their own vomit, overdosed on narcotics, outlived their legends or crashed a light aircraft into some Caribbean outcrop.

I mean the inevitable coming of Sir Sam Houser, or Dan Houser OBE.

Grand Theft Auto IV caps a body of work that is culturally and commercially significant enough to warrant official recognition.

According to the reviewers, it's officially the Best Game of All Time, getting full marks across the board. It will without doubt become one of the best-selling games ever, already smashing records all over despite being legally unavailable to half of gaming's demographic. The genuine fervour amongst gamers that greeted *GTA IV* makes recent rival launches look about as authentically passionate as the demand for a new version of Windows.

All well-versed superlatives – *GTA IV* has enjoyed unprecedented media coverage for a video game. But that's the key: 'for a video game'. Along with *Harry Potter*, this is the UK's most successful creative export for generations. Yet the UK media has been reluctant to celebrate – or is ignorant of – *GTA IV*'s British heritage. While the Housers' base their operations, and game, in New York, *Grand Theft Auto IV* is undoubtedly Best of British through and through.

CARRY ON CARJACKING

The original inventiveness of *Grand Theft Auto*, while now being refined rather than truly revolutionary, remains a testament to British game design of the old school. The satire – and *GTA IV* is the funniest game for years – has a savage edge more Sacha Baron Cohen than John Stewart or The Onion. The daunting in-game music library betrays the Catholic taste of a nation that brought the world Peel, Lennon and Radiohead, a world away from the musical ghettoising typical of America. Even the off-the-shelf technology is British-born, with Natural Motion's euphoria and Image Metrics' facial animation both making crucial contributions.

Much has been written about Dan Houser's script, and it's true this is the first game since the novelty of the early CD-ROM days where I can remember genuinely looking forward to the cut-scenes. MIT's Henry Jenkins was perhaps the first media heavyweight to start comparing *GTA* with D.W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation back with *GTA III*, but comparisons to cinema's coming-of-age have made their way into most of the coverage this time around.

We'll need a few years perspective to know for sure whether *GTA IV*'s characters, dialogue and staging hints at what games might yet do, or (more likely) reinforces our understanding of the limits. The in-game actionn remains completely cartoon-ish – about as gritty and ultra-violent as Donkey Kong throwing barrels at Mario. If Robert De Niro's Travis Bickle had wiped the scum off the streets at the rate of a dozen a second in a minute by running them over in a convertible listening to the Smashing Pumpkins while bawling Homer-esque putdowns out of the window, *Taxi Driver* would have been laughed out of the cinema. A few key moments aside (the executions you're forced to confront, in particular), harrowing it ain't.

That isn't a criticism, by the way. Games are games, not movies, and plot and character are (so far at least) there to provide signposts, not comprise a true narrative; what makes games special isn't and in my view never will be the story-telling. But it does provide a clue as to why the cultural elite still struggles to truly celebrate the medium. What games do brilliantly just isn't rated as highly as what other art forms are revered for. In time they – and *GTA IV* – will be appreciated accordingly, as today's arbiters of the cannon turn in their graves and a new generation find something else that's new, popular and superficially dangerous to underestimate.

The playful nature of *GTA IV* is also why today's rote moral outrage will eventually be no impediment to the Housers getting their high society dues. It's hard to appreciate now that rock music once shook society, but it did, and decades later Mick Jagger and Paul McCartney picked up their knighthoods regardless.

Despite the moniker, Rockstar's founders have (as far as I know) been kittens compared to the grand debauchery of rock's aristocracy at its height. One would-be tabloid assassination of the Housers found nothing at the bottom of the barrel except for late night PlayStation sessions and a comment from Sam Houser that *GTA* had got him dates. It's hardly wet fishes and groupies, never mind Johnny Rotten screaming down the monarchy.

THE EDINBURGH CASTLE

A more sustentative complaint would be that for all the pivotal contributions of the Housers to the series, *Grand Theft Auto* is a team effort – as the Housers themselves have repeatedly stressed – and so it wouldn't be fair to single out individuals. True, anyone with a nodding acquaintance of game development will see in *GTA IV* top-notch work across the board. More than that, the same tight team at Rockstar North has worked on the franchise for just as long as the Housers, and deserves at least as much credit for its excellence. And I'd fully agree. For all the coverage *GTA IV* has received, it palls compared to the laurels the British press would be casting towards a David Putnam movie or an Oasis album that made this sort of impact. Rockstar North's staff should be cruising down Princes Street in a tickertape parade.

> ***"Along with Harry Potter, Grand Theft Auto is the UK's most successful creative export for generations…"***

Nevertheless, I think it's indisputable that while the Housers didn't make *Grand Theft Auto* the game, they made it the game it is. Their record label smarts meets fanboy quest for excellence seemed like posturing a decade ago, but it's been vindicated and still informs so much of the game; the opening credits are more surprising, stylish and thrilling than the best bits of most rivals.

Besides, Sir Norman Foster didn't build the Gherkin with his bare hands, and Ringo Star never got a knighthood.

Perhaps the only valid question mark – aside from whether they tick the 'great work for charity' box, on which point I haven't a clue – is whether the *GTA* series is a one-off for the duo. Certainly Manhunt, Bully and others fell short of *GTA*'s sky-high standards. Few are the developers who excel across different games – Miyamoto, Mizuguchi, Wright and Molyneux are the few – and that's maybe the sign of true genius. It reinvents itself, rather than repeats its tricks.

EXILES ON MAIN ST.

On balance, *GTA* is achievement enough to warrant some establishment love. If nothing else, the entire Rockstar project is about the only thing to justify 20 years of public schoolboys identifying each other with salutations appropriated from the streets of South Central.

Would the Housers return the embrace? 'Sir Sam' might have a nice ring to it among the hip-hop princes and media mogul circles I idly speculate the Housers move in. And like Jagger the brothers are the progeny of the British establishment, so it'd be more a home coming party than a gate-crashing. On the other hand, Keith Richard's comment that he didn't want to take to a stage with Sir Mick in a "coronet and sporting the old ermine" might strike a chord. Then again, a crown and furs is pretty much standard rap star attire these days.

The important point isn't really the Housers, for all that they deserve an official handshake from UK PLC for what they've achieved. It's that *Grand Theft Auto IV* is the greatest British cultural artifact of the Twenty First Century so far, and video game development in this country deserves to be recognised routinely, not shoved to one side and occasionally investigated by a government quango with tweezers.

Perhaps the Housers would need to open the RockStar School for Gifted Game Designers in Macclesfield or set *GTA IV* in Salford to accelerate the process, but *GTA*'s achievement's will eventually be recognised by more than gamers, reviewers, and Electronic Arts.

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Pardon my French

At Ubisoft's Ubidays showcase in Paris last month, the firm reiterated its well-documented plans to grow its studio headcount. **Tim Ingham** caught up with the firm's head of global development Christine Burgess-Quémard to get the full story…

You recently extended your studios into Kiev from Romania. Why did you pick the Ukraine?
We're looking at Kiev to tap into a new talent pool. A city like Kiev has very good universities. Eastern Europe has historically been known for producing very good programmers and Ubisoft is always interested in looking at new talent. We're tapping into new areas.

What sort of projects will they be looking after?
Before we can do a project, we have to train them into our industry – and into our company as well. So there will be a period of time when they actually learn from the other studios and help some of the studios. Only once that's done can they take on a project of their own – it's done gradually. Until then, we don't now exactly what they'll be working on.

What is the level of expansion coming at Ubisoft this year – and how are you going to grow in Eastern Europe in particular?
We're going to increase our headcount by 900 this year globally. We keep on looking at how we can expand and grow our studios in that area, but we're not limited to Eastern Europe. We're looking at Asia very much as well because we have to be competitive. It's becoming a bit more difficult in Eastern Europe because those countries are now joining Europe [the EU], which gives the same issues we have in the UK and in other 'established' countries.

Globally, what's the overall strategy for expansion – organic growth or acquisition?
Both – growing our existing base and acquisition as well. We're looking at regions where we can find a good mix between the talent, the education level and cost. We have to find the right balance between the right talent and the right price. That's where our challenge is.

Many companies seem to be targeting Korea. Is that somewhere you're looking at?
We just opened in Singapore, which is obviously close to Korea. All I can say on that one is that we're always looking and considering suitable territories.

Why is it more attractive for you to open studios in emerging markets than established territories – not least the UK?
First of all, the pound is very high, and then as far as I know the UK Government still hasn't decided to help developers. It's very competitive out there and the development costs are going to get higher and higher in future – they're going to be huge, in fact. When we receive the next generation of consoles, it's probably going to take teams of 250 to 300 people for just one project. We have to find some places where we can still develop with a competitive edge.

What do you make of the Games Up campaign? Does it stand a chance of success, do you think?
If we didn't think it wouldn't have any success, we wouldn't be part of it. I don't know really – we'll have to wait and see.

If UK studios were granted some financial relief from the state, how much more of an attractive area would it make the UK for Ubusoift?
Very attractive. Historically, there's been a very interesting bunch of people in the UK – very creative people. We have our studio working on *Driver* in Newcastle, which was an acquisition – that just goes to show we know the talent is there and worth spending money on. We've been in the industry long enough to remember when the UK was leading the world in development. But at the moment, the UK Government just doesn't understand what this industry can bring to the country, which is what other governments have done. I hope it won't be too late by the time they understand that and that all the development opportunity will have gone. It's suffering at the moment and the danger is it will come too late.

> ***"The UK Government just doesn't understand what this industry can bring to the country, which is what other governments have done..."***

Have you seen a migration of UK developers going abroad – and is this a danger to our domestic industry?
We do have a recruitment team that is very efficient and covers the whole world, and they have tapped into the UK market. I would say yes to that question – much impressive talent has left the UK already, especially to the US or to Canada and even countries like China.

Have you seen that increase in the last few years?
I don't have any statistics so I couldn't say for sure, but I think it's been pretty constant. There's definitely a trend every year, however. We always welcome British people on board.

Do you plan to have a bigger worldwide operation than EA or Activision-Blizzard – and how long will this take?
We want to expand our business. We want to continue our strategy of innovation, and in order to do that, we need to have more people and generate more business. Every blockbuster we work on, we invest in new studios, new teams and new projects. So, to your question, yes. We are in the race, definitely – and we're not in it to come last.

Are you keeping a close eye on EA/Take Two movements – and will that affect your strategy on the studio side?
We're watching like the rest of the industry is, because obviously there's been a few marriages before that have had an effect. We're always happy to see newlyweds, but it won't affect our studio strategy in terms of what we want to bring to consumers.

You've made a point of making partnerships with the education sectors. How important is that in terms of where to expand your studios?
It's important to us because we know that when it comes to graduates, we need people who are interesting to us. We're trying to work closer with universities. In Canada, we worked closely with them to ensure that when people actually leave they will be trained with some of the engines we use.

There's been criticism in the UK of some courses saying that graduates aren't learning the actual skills they need. Do you think educators need to work with real studios in that territory?
I think so, because you need to understand it's a huge industry out here. We have lot of convergence and synergy – and we're going to have more and more with movies, animation and TV. It's a very big industry that anybody of university level should look into our market because there will be jobs to hire and they need to realise that.

Ubisoft has taken advantage of the Quebec tax credits and backed France in getting a similar deal. How important are these to Ubisoft network – and how would you handle it if these were removed?
We're not the only ones targeting these territories – especially in Quebec. As I said, it's important to keep our competitive edge, but it's not possible without the talent. We're not going to go into a country where we get huge help from the Government if we don't have the right talent and they don't have the knowledge we can train them on top of. It's secondary to the fact that we have the opportunity to find educated people to join the industry.

Ubisoft's core titles have a very high success rate. What's the secret? Does it come from studio level?
I would say yes it comes from studio level, but don't tell the others. [Laughs] No, we do a great job of selling and marketing as well as development. We work together very closely and above all that's a big help. The success of Ubisoft is because we have a good analysis of where the market is going at all times. We're very skilled at being close to the consumer and anticipating their needs. That said, you need to surprise the consumer – and innovation is key for us.

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Coding Keynote: Halo AI Retrospective: 8 Years of Work on 30 Seconds of Fun.
Damian Isla, Bungie Studios

At Least We Aren't Doing That: Finding and Fixing Real Life Next Gen Performance Mistakes.
Allan Murphy, Microsoft

Physical Gaming and Cameras: Out of the Lab and into the Living Room.
Diarmid Campbell, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe

Design

Game Design Keynote: Why the Future is Brighter Than Ever.
David Braben, Frontier Development.

How to Make Children Cry.
Jonathan Smith, Traveller's Tales

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Phil Spencer, Microsoft

Why We Sold our Studio - And Why We didn't: A Candid Discussion About Selling Up or Staying Free.
Sarah Chudley, Bizarre Creations; Paul Wedgwood, Splash Damage; Ian Baverstock, Kuju Entertainment; Michael French, Intent Media

The Truth About Developing Video Games On Time.
Andrew Eades, Relentless Software

Production

Production Keynote: Working Hard and Having Fun: How Naughty Dog Made Uncharted: Drake's Fortune.
Richard Lemarchand, Naughty Dog

Creating Drama from Script to Gameplay.
Tameem Antonaides, Ninja Theory

Accessible Game Design.
Tommy Francois, Ubisoft

Art & Animation

Re-rendering Magical Movie Moments in Games.
Phil Gray, Traveller's Tales

Before Pixels and Polygons: Using Traditional Art Techniques to Guide Technology.
Cumron Ashtiani, Midway Newcastle.

World Vision

Secrets of Process Excellence: The Latest Evidence From Industry Leaders.
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Contact simon@aswift.com

Experienced Artists
£Neg + Benefits

Yorkshire SH856EA

My is a leading independent developer based in South Yorkshire. Strong financial backing means they are able to offer good stability and a solid career path. They are currently staffing up their 2nd dev-team and require a handful of experienced Environment, Character and FX Artists with experience of at least 1 full production cycle in these roles.

Contact simon@aswift.com

Senior Technical Designer
£Excellent + Benefits

Midlands SH2297TD

My client are looking for a industry experienced designer to handle all technical design related issues on their upcoming console AAA. You will have experience of dealing with game mechanics, game-play AI and have strong scripting skills. Experience of developing vehicle handling systems will also be of great advantage.

Contact simon@aswift.com

Senior Animator
£28k - £38k

Midlands/South-East KM1362SA

This is a fantastic opportunity to work for a leading independent developer who have achieved critical and commercial success with their previous releases. They urgently require an experienced Senior Animator to lead the animation team and produce realistic human character models and animation for a new title on PS3.

Contact katie@aswift.com

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North West PA308F2

Are you an experienced console / PC programmer who really knows how to wring performance out of a machine? You will be working in the Render Tech Team and be instrumental in pushing the development of the next-gen rendering components of the this company's cross-platform engine on PS3, 360 and PC.

Contact pete@aswift.com

Tools Programmer
£30 - £40k

Midlands PA1911F2

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Contact danny@aswift.com

Quality Assurance Localisation Supervisor
£Excellent + Benefits

Berkshire DJ542LS

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BUILD

THE LATEST TOOLS NEWS, TECH UPDATES & TUTORIALS

"With some smart budgeting you can do amazing things with DSPs…" p63

TOOLS: The latest tech news

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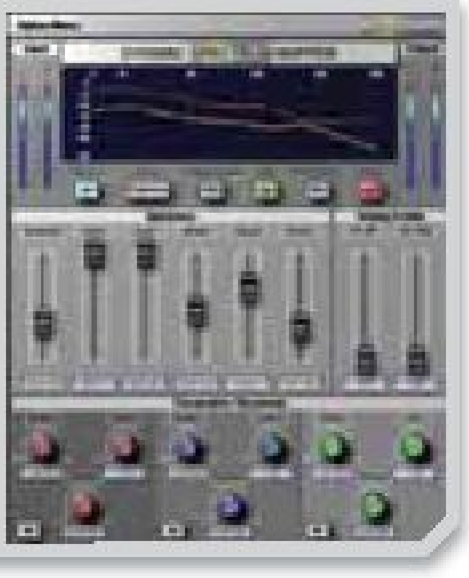

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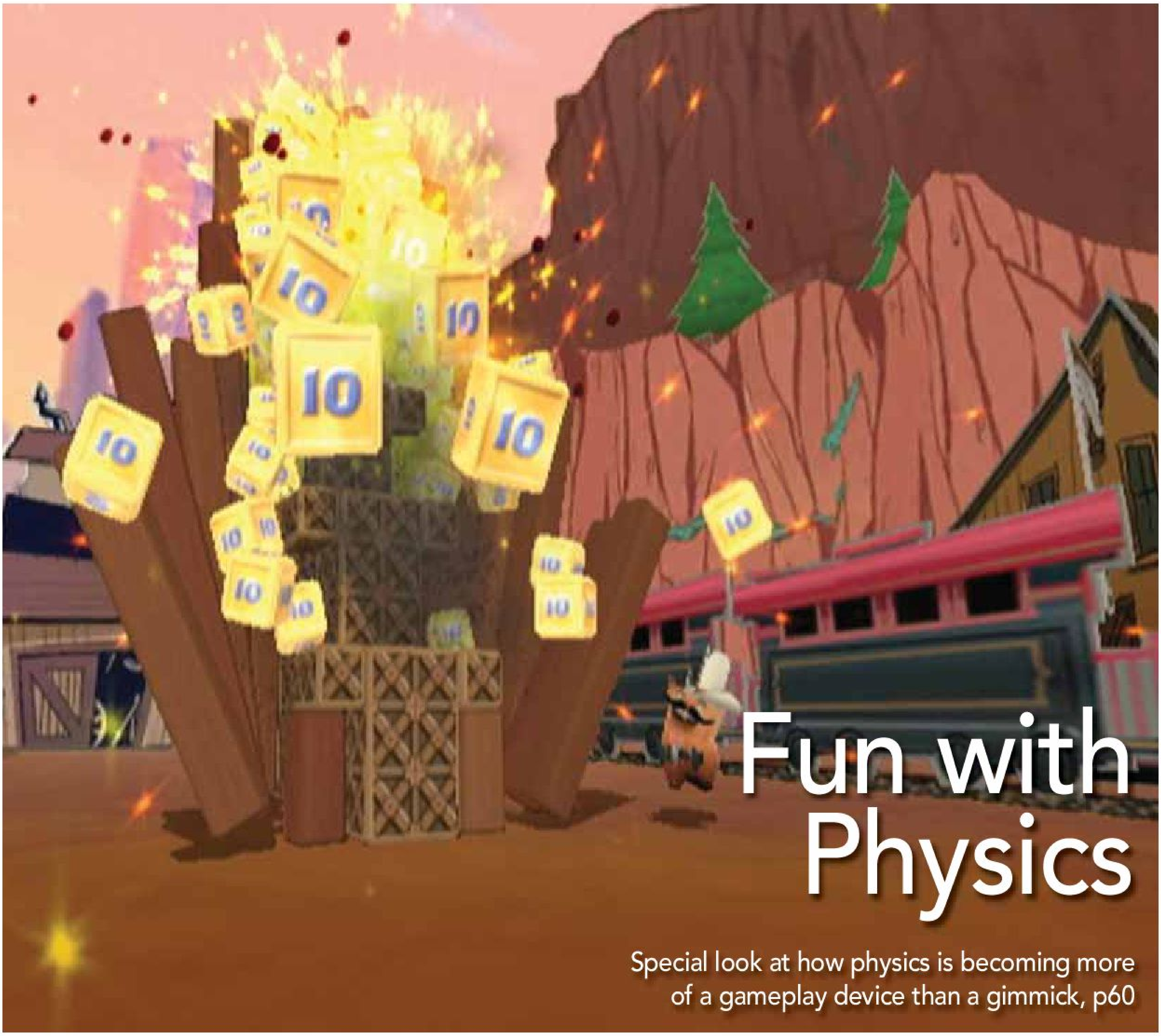


Fun with Physics

Special look at how physics is becoming more of a gameplay device than a gimmick, p60

TUTORIAL: CHARACTER MODELLING, PART TWO > p67

Raising a cup to middleware start-ups

AS EVERYONE WHO'S EVER regularly read a column knows, it doesn't take too long for the writer to run down their reservoir of significant thoughts and start to weave, however tenuously, the minutiae of their life into context. Thankfully, we're not quite at that stage, but only because someone did phone me out-of-the-blue to discuss a start-up middleware company.

After I'd rubbed the surprise out of my eye (phoning a freelance journalist before 9am is never recommended), the conversation produced some interesting conclusions. At least for me. I can't suggest the other party was overwhelmed by my pearls of wisdom, but the process of trying to formulate coherency about the subject did compress otherwise uncertain thoughts into something more definite. Presumably that's why people go to therapy.

And maybe TIGA should have a similar consultant on standby for its middleware members, because the more you consider the process, especially in terms of the start-up, the more depressed you get. Not only do you need a brilliant idea, you need to present it in a beautifully gift-wrapped box and sell it for a very reasonable price. That's not the sort of market they teach you to get involved with in MBA school.

Indeed, to my mind, a successful middleware company is always a more hard won victory than a successful game developer. For one thing, it's generally a more personal undertaking. A bad game can be put down to experience, but bad technology is seldom forgiven.

So good fortune then to the companies embarking on such a journey, as well as good luck to those established enough to be nominated in the Tools Provider section of the Develop Awards. And don't forget, you can always give me a call (but in the afternoon please).

Jon Jordan
jon.jordan@intentmedia.co.uk

< ART >

GROWING UP SEAMLESSLY

Spiral Graphics' Genetica offers texture artists flexibility and features

WHEN IT COMES TO tools for texture artists, trusty old Photoshop remains the industry standard, but there are specialised options that can offer better workflow and more specialised features too.

One such is Genetica, a seamless texture and graphics package, developed specifically for game artists. Developer Spiral Graphics has just announced that version 3.0 of the software will be released in the autumn.

It will include several new features such as a vector drawing tool, an editor for High Dynamic Range Image (HDRI) environment maps, and a new Studio Edition.

"Customer feedback plays an important role, especially when it comes to polishing features and understanding the general directions the industry is taking, but we also have a tradition where the biggest additions come from our own research," explains Spiral's Courtney O'Connor.

"In the case of Genetica 3.0, this includes the world's first professional-quality drawing tools that are specifically tailored to creating seamless textures. We took the idea even further by creating a system where you can non-destructively apply visual styles to your vector illustrations including such effects as HDRI reflections, refractions, bevels, and textures."

O'Connor says these drawing tools reflect Genetica's flexibility by enabling you to use features as much or as little as you need.

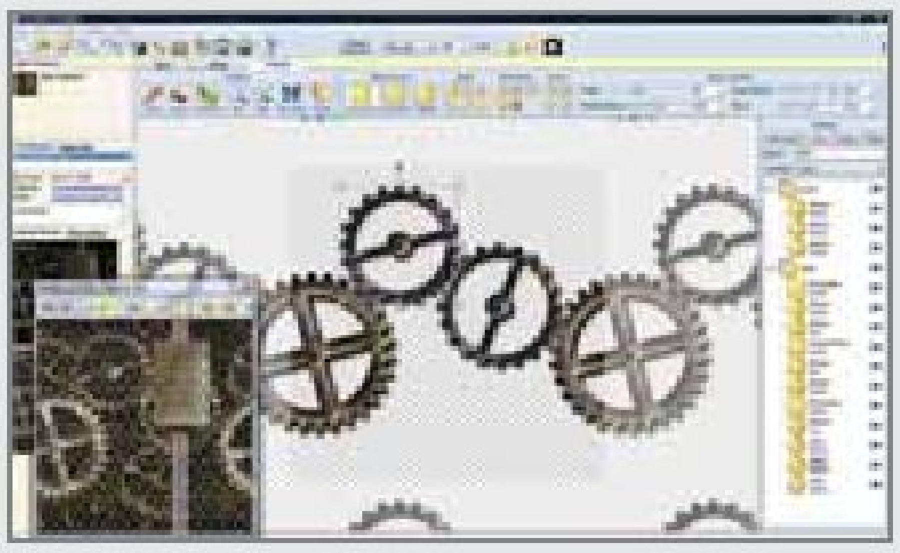
"The drawing tools are exposed in the form of a node we call Canvas," he says. "So if you were creating a cave texture, you might choose to set it up as a predominantly procedural stone texture, with a Canvas node merely adding a few scattered cave paintings. On the other hand, if you were creating a pirate's treasure map, you might choose to do the majority of the work using the Canvas node's illustrations tools, with just a few procedural nodes after it to apply the necessary weathering effects to make the map appear weathered."

And it's this commitment to non-destructive workflow that O'Connor says should appeal, particularly to game artists.

"Everything done to a texture in Genetica retains its individuality so that modifications can be returned to and adjusted in any order," he says. "This enables greater efficiency. For example, the special sauce you developed to make your treasure map look old could then be tweaked and reapplied to the walls of an old house."

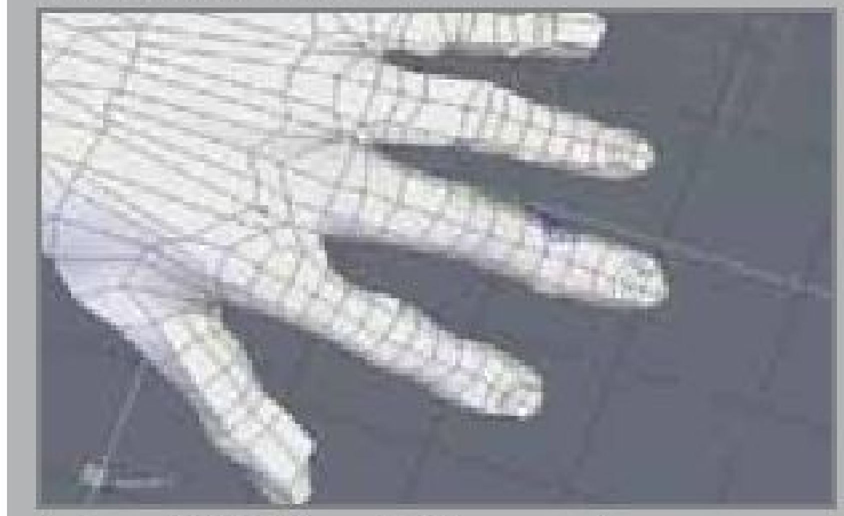
www.spiralgraphics.biz

Genetica v3.0



Price: From $149 to $899
Company: Spiral Graphics
Contact: courtneyoconnor@spiralgraphics.biz

Hexagon 2.5



Price: $74.50 or $49 upgrade
Company: Daz3D
Contact: +01 801 495 1777
www.daz3d.com

DAZ 3D's subdivisional character and illustrative modelling package Hexagon has reached its version 2.5 release, with major additions including a sculpted primitive tool, an enhanced UV-mapping and freehand brush modelling tool, and fast ambient occlusion. In particular, the sculpted primitive tool enables you to export direct into Second Life using the TGA file format. It also offers a great improvement in terms of creating complex and organic shapes that have previously been unattainable with Second Life's current modelling system. Also included in Hexagon 2.5 are export pipes into the DAZ Studio and DAZ Carrara packages.

Flash Player 10

Price: Free (pre-release beta)
Company: Adobe
Contact: +44 208 606 1100
www.adobe.com

Its moniker is couched in caveats but the pre-release version of Flash Player 10 software, codename Astro, is available in beta from on from the Adobe Labs' website. New additions include support for custom filters and effects, native 3D transformation and animation, extensible rich text layout, and hardware acceleration. As you'd expect, Adobe claims the overall impact is to enable users to create new levels of cinematic experiences across multiple browsers and operating systems. Of particular note is interoperability with the Adobe Pixel Bender toolkit, which is used to write the pixel-shading functions that underpin the custom filters, blend modes and fills.

< CODING >

TO INFINITY... AND BEYOND

Intel, SGI and NASA plan the world's fastest supercomputer by 2009

IT MIGHT NOT BE too long before talk about the new, exotic, massively parallel computing architectures that will power future games consoles start to filter out of the labs and into the public consciousness. But before we have to start hearing about how nefarious dictatorships will be daisy-chaining the boxes to create some sort of nuclear armageddon, it's worth hearing about some real supercomputing.

Most recently, Intel, SGI and NASA got together to announce an agreement to increase the computational capabilities for modeling and simulation at NASA's Advanced Supercomputing facility.

Working together on a project called Pleiades, and based on Intel's multi-core processors, the three are planning to develop one computational system with a capacity of one Petaflops peak performance (1,000 trillion operations per second) by 2009, and another system with a peak performance of 10 Petaflops (10,000 trillion operations per second) by 2012. This would increase NASA's computational resources 16 fold by 2009.

Currently the world's fastest supercomputer is the IBM Blue Gene architecture, which in its BlueGene/L configuration at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, can reach sustained speeds of 0.478 Petaflops and 0.596 Petaflops at peak.

Using this power, researchers have carried out experiments including the ten second simulation of half a mouse's brain and playing *Crysis* with all the graphical features switched on (okay, we made that last bit up; maybe that'll be worked out by 2009).

www.nasa.gov

Pleiades

Price: N/A
Company: Intel, SGI, NASA
Contact: N/A

XNA Game Studio 3.0 CTP

Price: Free
Company: Microsoft
Contact: +44 870 60 10 100
www.microsoft.com

A frustrating situation for Europeans perhaps, given Microsoft has yet to release its Zune media player over here, but version 3.0 of its XNA Game Studio enables you to develop 2D games for the device, if you have one. Currently available in a beta form – officially the Community Technology Preview - Zune features supported include wireless play and the ability to access music stored on the Zune for in-game use. In addition, there are enhancements to the XNA Framework API for media support and sound effects. XNA Game Studio 3.0 CTP doesn't support Xbox 360, only PC and Zune, however.

Qt 4.4

Price: Available on request
Company: Trolltech
Contact: +47 21 60 48 00
www.trolltech.com

It might not sound like a particularly significant release, but despite the 4.4 nomenclature this version of Trolltech's cross-platform software development framework, Qt, incorporates some important building blocks. The key one is support for WebKit, the open source browser engine used in Apple's Safari browser, as well as iPhone and many of Nokia's smartphones. The integration allows you to blend web and native content and functionality in a more coherent manner. Windows Embedded CE and multimedia framework Phonon are also supported, while improvements in the concurrency framework make it easier to develop multi-threaded applications and take advantage of multi-core systems.

< AUDIO >

FINDING THE RIGHT SOUNDS

Efficient workflow is the goal of integrated solution NetMix Pro

IT'S USED BY THE likes of EA and Neversoft to control their sound libraries and now version 4 of Creative Network Design's NetMix Pro integrated audio asset management solution has been released.

As you might expect with such a system, the focus is on making the workflow and user interface as smooth as possible while ensuring that the under-the-hood features remain as powerful as possible.

To that extent, support has been improved for polyphonic multi-channels and LDAP and active directory integration, while the db3 database engine and music project manager have been enhanced. In terms of simplified UI, there's now a resizable clip editor and new info views include thumbnails of CD artwork. The package is also compatible with Mac OS X 10.5.1 and Pro Tools HD 7.4.1, and seamlessly integrates with other audio packages including Nuendo, Avid, Final Cut Pro, Dalet and Fairlight.

"Having paid for Pro Tools, Logic, and Nuendo, most game developers would like to move to a less expensive, easier-to-install library management software package," says Creative Network Design founder and president, Markus Schmidt. "NetMix ensures all pre-recorded libraries are centralised and much more organised. Customers need to make sure their studio operations, wherever they're located, can easily share files and NetMix enables game development audio engineers to do this quickly and easily."

www.creativenetworkdesign.com

NetMix Pro v4.0

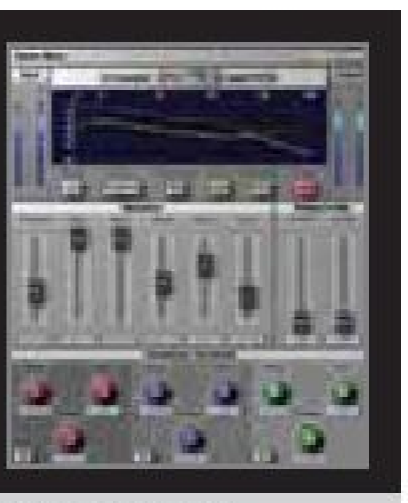
Price: $990
Company: Creative Network Design
Contact: +1 702 505 4478

AudioTools AWE v1.4

Price: $395
Company: Minnetonka Audio Software
Contact: +49 2162 1062622
www.minnetonkaaudio.com

Minnetonka Audio continues its wave of activity. This month that means a point release for its automated audio workflow engine AudioTools AWE. Version 1.4 adds more audio formats for conversion, as well as feature enhancements. Key amongst these is intelligent file handling on Folder Drop. Stereo or surround sets of discreet mono files in the same folder will follow AWE channel identification filenames, automatically creating Channel Groups. The parsing of MP3 files for playback has also been optimised, with a metadata file generated for each MP3 file selected for playback. Support is added for W64 files and .AU files.

Dynamic Spectrum Mapper



Price: £200
Company: Pro Audio DSP
Contact: enquiries@proaudiodsp.com
www.proaudiodsp.com

The team behind the Sony OXF-R3 mixing console and Sony Oxford plugins has released its first product since starting up new outfit Pro Audio DSP. The Dynamic Spectrum Mapper is a RTAS plugin for Pro Tools that enables you to capture the frequency domain characteristics of a program and use this as a basis for compression. This provides flexible control in terms of the spectral response and dynamic characteristics of audio, allowing you to match the sonic characters of dissimilar-sounding tracks, carry out microphone proximity correction, model instrument sounds, and personalise your mixes to a much greater extent than previously possible.

Smart thinking for

Always interesting, at present the market for games-related artificial intelligence technology is even more fluid than usual…

Like a slowly swinging pendulum, the trend within the games AI middleware market has once again moved away from games. It may seem like a nonsensical thing to say, but as well as Pregasis effectively withdrawing one-time market leading product AI.implant, French company SpirOps also seems to focusing more on the simulation market these days. It's exactly the same decisions taken by companies such as Stottler Henke and MASA a couple of years ago.

But it's not all bad news. PathEngine continues to burn its own track for companies looking for pure pathfinding software, while Kynogon's acquisition by Autodesk will surely result in something novel, although whether we'll be able to place it neatly within a box marked 'AI middleware' remains to be seen.

The real joker in the pack however is AIseek, which has sprung to life in 2008 with its Intia AI chip. The company has found its first client - MMOG company Simutronics, and it could be that adding the specialised hardware within the massed server racks of MMOG providers is a workable business model. Certainly the recent history of Ageia would suggest that if gamers don't want to buy a physics add-in card, an AI add-in card is even more unlikely.

KYNOGON

TECHNOLOGY: Kynapse v5

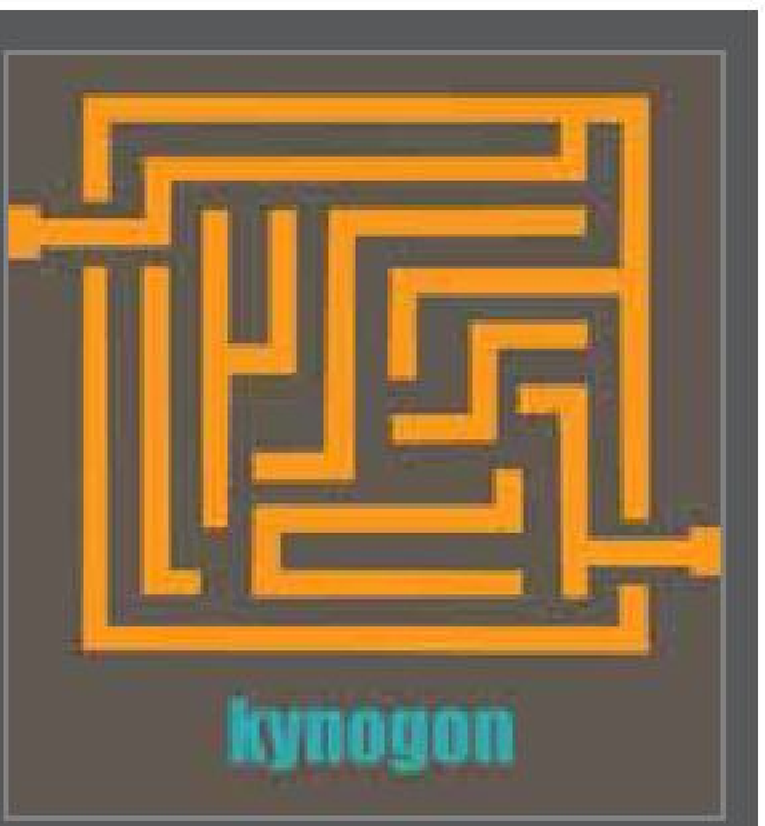
CLIENTS: Activision, Bethesda, DICE, EA, Realtime Worlds, Spark Unlimited, THQ, Vivendi

PLATFORMS: PC, PlayStation 3, PSP, Wii, Xbox 360

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER TECHNOLOGIES: Unreal Engine 3

COST: Available on request

CONTACT: +33 156 035 980



Kynogon's Kynapse AI engine now offers 3D pathfinding

www.kynogon.com

Where next for Kynogon? The French company, which released version 5 of its popular Kynapse middleware at GDC 2008, has also been bought by Autodesk, with future plans involving the development of a new suite of technology sitting between Autodesk's 3D content creation tools and runtime engines. In the meantime, new features for v5 include 3D pathfinding and support for multi-threaded and multi-core hardware.

PATHENGINE

TECHNOLOGY: PathEngine v5.16

CLIENTS: Avalanche Studios, Flying Lab Software, NCsoft, People Can Fly, Rare

PLATFORMS: PlayStation 3, PC, Xbox 360

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER TECHNOLOGIES: 3ds Max, Maya

COST: From €4,500 to €13,000

CONTACT: +33 4 78 27 06 02

PathEngine is a focused pathfinding and collision engine

www.pathengine.com

It says much about the AI middleware market that one of the most successful products is also one of the most focused. As its name suggests PathEngine is all about providing points-of-visibility pathfinding and collision on 3D ground surfaces, with particular attention being paid to how obstacles and surface edges constrain agent movement. The SDK also comes with a graphical test bed and associated tools.

AISEEK

TECHNOLOGY: Intia processor

CLIENTS: Simutronics

PLATFORMS: PC

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER TECHNOLOGIES: Ageia, HeroEngine

COST: Available on request

CONTACT: +972 3 612 0306

AIseek combined an AI chip with an SDK

www.aiseek.com

Despite operating in stealth mode for a number of years, it seems as if Israel AI chip company AIseek is finally close to launch. For one thing, it hass announced its first customer. A deal with Simultronics will see the pathfinding, terrain analysis and line-of-sight technology used for its MMOG engine, although it's not clear whether this deal is for the chip themselves or the associated AI SDK.

dummies

SPIROPS

TECHNOLOGY: SpirOps AI

CLIENTS: Kylotonn, Le Caillou, Quantic Dream, Ubisoft

PLATFORMS: PC, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER TECHNOLOGIES: None

COST: Available on request

CONTACT: +33 1 48 05 10 98

SpirOps offers pathfinding, crowds and behaviour AI

www.spirops.com

Originally marketing itself as the first graphical interface for AI creation, SpirOps' technology comes in three parts. There's the main SDK, which is designed to handle behaviours using a Drive model; the Path Generator, which is used to create navigational paths; and Crowd, which offers basic libraries for moving large numbers of NPCs. Most recently SpirOps has branched out from games to focus on AI solutions for virtual realities.

PRESAGIS

TECHNOLOGY: AI.implant v5

CLIENTS: BioWare, EA, Midway, Vivendi

PLATFORMS: PC, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER TECHNOLOGIES: Unreal Engine 3

COST: Free

CONTACT: +1 800 361 6424

AI.implant is integrated with Unreal Engine 3

www.ai-implant.com

It was one of the first successful game AI pathfinding products, but since parent company Presagis decided to switch focus to the simulation market in July 2007, AI.implant isn't really a viable option for commercial game development. Despite being available without cost, it's not being supported or maintained for consoles, although the makers of serious games may find it a more useful tool.

Code Builds Need Love

by David Jefferies

Black Rock Studio

I'VE BEEN TRYING to knuckle down and do a bit more coding recently because we've been setting up a new game with a new code base and I've not had a chance to dig around it yet.

The first thing I noticed was how long I spent sitting in my chair staring at the compiler building my code. A single file recompile and link was taking more than 60 seconds, which is just enough time for me to forget what I was doing, and a full rebuild has started taking 20 minutes. A couple of people suggested this slowness was down to the fact that with modern games we have much more code than we've had in the past.

So I went into the archives to check out how much code size has increased over the years.

I dug out the statistics for *WipEout* which launched in 1996, and it contained about 100,000 lines of code. *MotoGP'07* which was launched last summer for Xbox 360 contained about 300,000 lines of code. Moore's law dictates that in the intervening period processing power has increased by 256 times – so by that rationale *GP* should build 80 times quicker than *WipEout*. It doesn't. If anything it currently builds slightly slower.

A while ago on an earlier version of *MotoGP* we had made a concerted effort to improve build times. By using the features of the compiler such as precompiled headers, incremental linking and minimal rebuild we were able to get big speed-ups. These features need a lot of care and attention to ensure they're feeding the compiler the optimal command line. An engineer spent a week lovingly tuning the build system and by the end of that time he'd achieved a full rebuild in five minutes and a single file rebuild and relink in five seconds.

That's not as fast as Moore's law predicts, but at least we're getting into the right ball park.

At GDC this year Bungie claimed they could also rebuild their game code from scratch in five minutes so this seems to be a reasonable figure to aim for in the short term. In the long term our Infrastructure Lead believes we can reduce the average time even further by utilising a network cache so that any code module only ever gets built once across the studio.

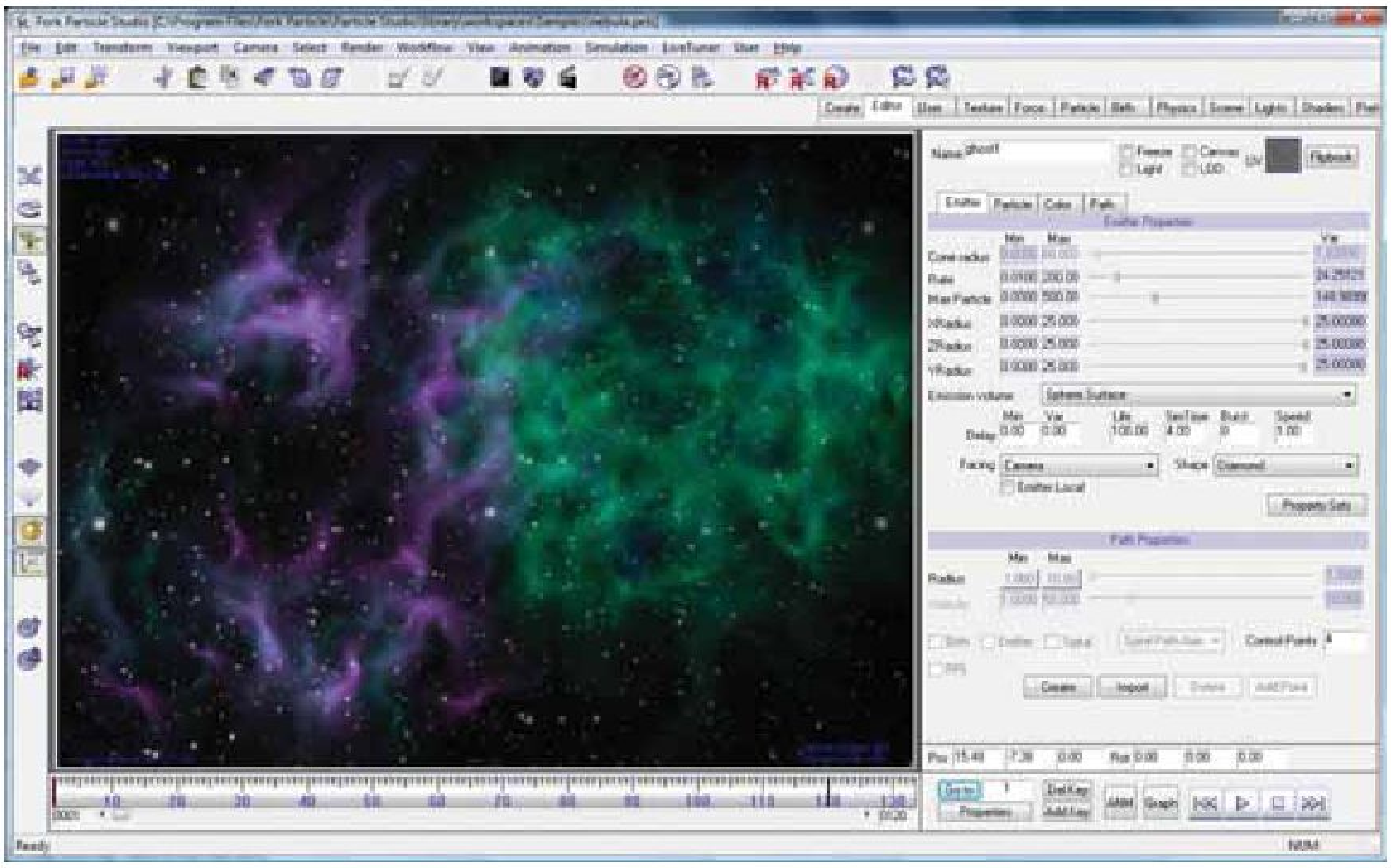
So sometime recently our code build started taking longer and now we've got to unpick the problem, find where it was introduced, and get it back on track. The moral of this story seems to be that code builds need constant monitoring or they can fall into disrepair. One way good way of doing this is to set up a job in the nightly build that measures how long the build is taking and publish a graph showing how that time has changed over the last few months. In that way any anomalies can be easily spotted and quickly fixed.

KEYRELEASE

Triggering the light fantastic

Particle effects middleware Fork Particle is all about making the most of your game's big events, **Jon Jordan** discovers…

PRODUCT: Fork Particle v2.5
COMPANY: Fork Particle
PRICE: Available on request
CONTACT: nkhawaja@forkparticle.com
W: www.forkparticle.com



OVER THE PAST FIVE years, the prevailing trend in middleware has been a push to extremes; either an 'everything and the kitchen sink' approach to complete engines or technology so specialised only the largest publishers would bother trying to match it internally. The area in between – nice but not essential tools – have been all but wiped out.

To that extent, as a company completely focused on particle effects, Fork Particle should be well positioned. Another good sign is founder Noor Khawaja is passionate about the technology.

"Particle effects are perfect to convey the mood and intensity of a situation or event. A flash and burst of particles delivers the 'KAPOW!' in a fighting game, while an explosion effect gives the sense of how much damage is caused," he enthuses.

This attitude is based on longterm game experience too.

"Since I started in the industry 15 years ago, effects have always fascinated me," he says.

"I saw a gap for a professional effects authoring tool and real-time multi-platform middleware that would give developers the ability to create high quality particle effects quickly and integrate them into their games easily."

Fork Particle, which is based in California, was established in 2004, gaining its first commercial client two years later when Mad Doc Software (now Rockstar New England) used its technology in *Empire Earth III*. Since then the likes of THQ, Net Devil and Turbine have licensed it.

It consists of two basic components; Fork Particle Studio, which is used to author the effects, and the Fork Particle SDK, which integrates into your game engine and runs them. It, in turn, consists of simulation and rendering parts. There's also the Fork Asset Converter which deals with integration into the build process.

"The particle simulator portion integrates fairly quickly because we provide the necessary source code that works at the application level," Khawaja explains.

"For the rendering part, you have the option to use the renderer we provide or hook up the simulator with your renderer."

He claims a fundamental integration, including loading effects files or data and rendering them in game, generally takes between four to six days. Integration samples are available for DirectX, OpenGL and the main consoles, and an out-of-the-box integration with Emergent's Gamebryo engine is a current work-in-progress.

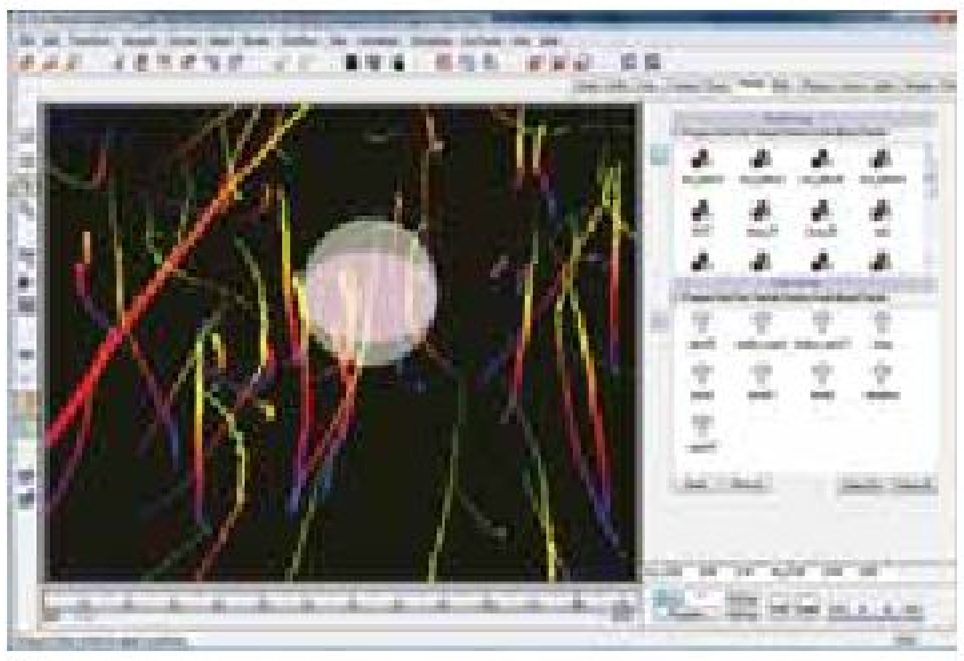
Perhaps the most important part of Fork Particle however is the authoring side. Built using an plug-in architecture, Particle Studio features the Fork Live Tuner, which provides a live update facility so at the end of the creation process you can effectively edit your effects in-game to ensure they are just so.

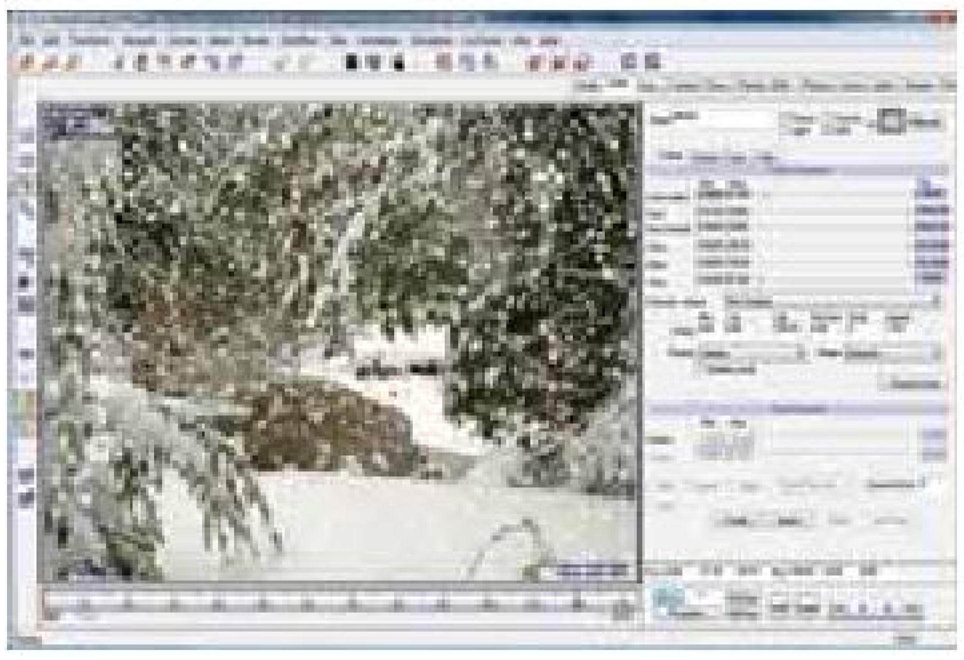
"This is a key part of development because it's when artists are finalising their effects," Khawaja says. "Not only are they making sure their effects are working and displaying as intended during gameplay, but they can tweak effects in terms of performance too. For that reason alone, the Live Tuner is an essential tool in terms of saving on development time."

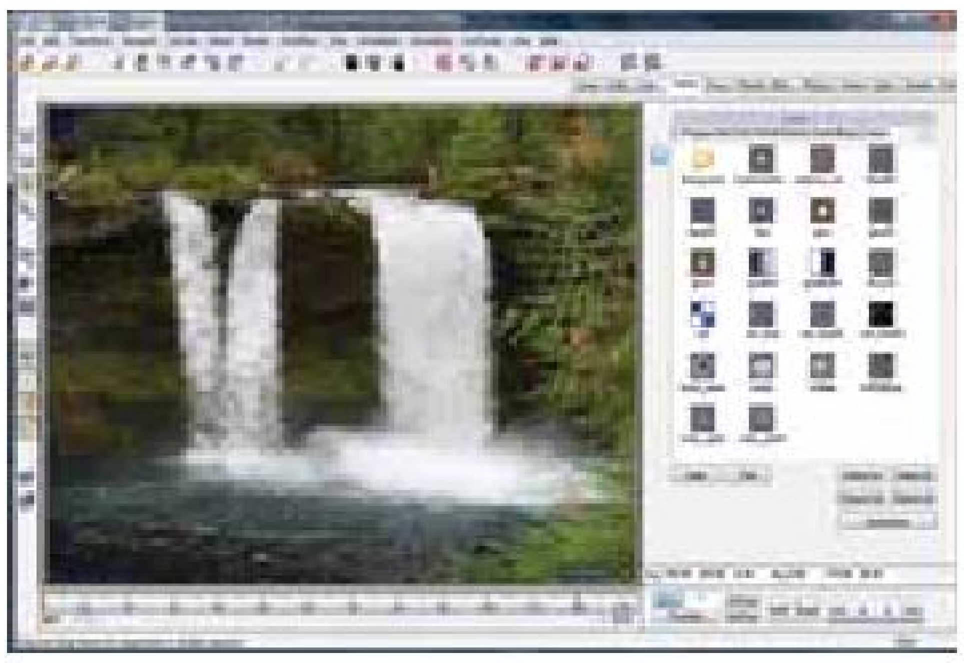
He says it's all part of the philosophy that sees Fork Particle's development focusing on letting artists use their creativity rather than fighting the tools. "In this way they're able to create higher quality effects," he points out.

Customisation is another focus. "It's common for programmers to add to the functionality of particle systems according to their game design," he says. "Fork Runtime SDK was designed while keeping extendibility in mind."

Similarly Particle Studio's plug-in architecture means you can override the factory default plug-ins to embed your custom data into the particle system. And ensuring the technology remains as flexible, and as spectacular, as possible is the goal of Fork Particle's current development cycle.







Top: This Fork Particle demo shows the generation of glowing coloured superstrings

Middle: As well as snow, rain, fire and smoke, Fork Particle can generate flashes, explosions, debris and laser beams

Bottom: Correctly used, particle effects can be used to simulate many different things including fluids

The next shiny thing

As with all middleware, future versions of Fork Particle are being enhanced both in terms of basic functionality as well as customer requirements. So, as well as the previously mentioned Gamebryo integration, work is being undertaken to multi-thread the particle system to support multi-core processors on PC.

More significant perhaps is the attempt to release technology specifically for those developers creating downloadable console games, whether for Xbox Live Arcade, Wiiware or the PlayStation Store. "We're developing something for the console Live Arcade developers, and will be making an announcement soon, so watch this space," Noor Khawaja says.

More generally however is the ongoing push to ensure Fork Particle is a flexible as possible, both in terms of authoring and integration.

"Effect artists want independence during the integration phase in that other game assets don't have to altered during integration. Artists want to create their complete sequence in the effects authoring tool and this highlights the need for plug and play particle," explains Khawaja. "That is what we have been reacting to over time. We are close, but I think with the addition of a few minor elements we will have a better package."

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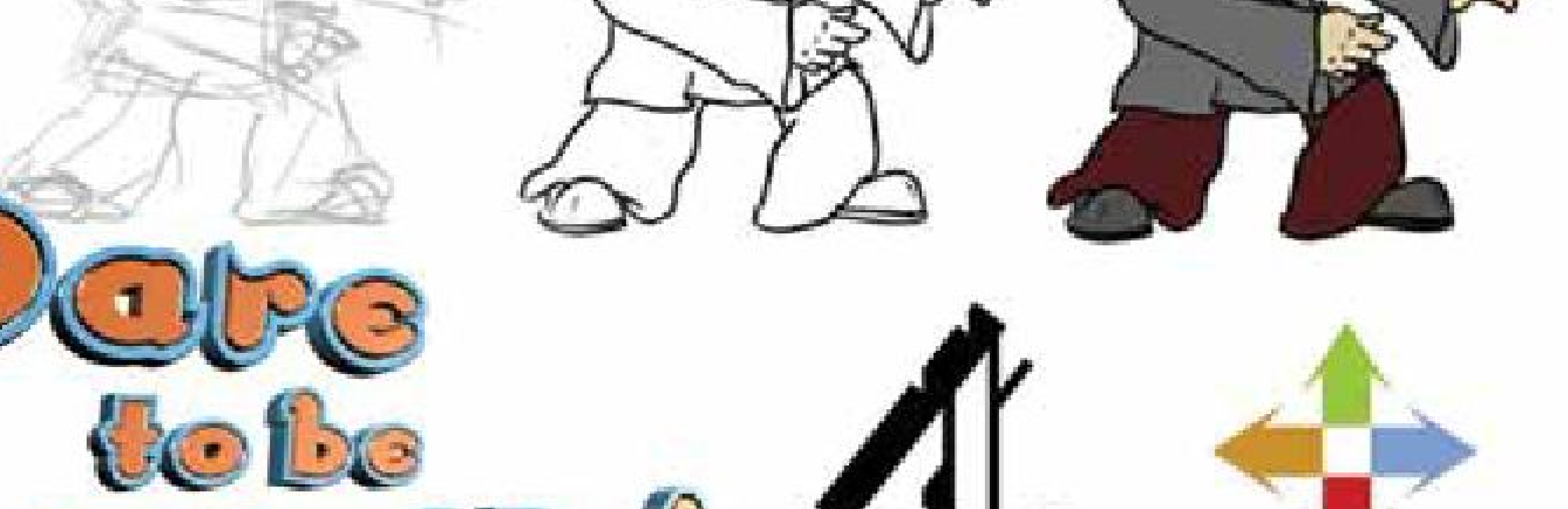


Dare to be Digital

Dare ProtoPlay

Physical exercises

Applying physics to your games can mean more than upturning tables and ragdolls, as **Ed Fear** discovers…

Time was, adding physics to your game meant that barrels could be rolled, crates knocked, and enemies could be sent spiraling (or rather flopping) to their demise. But a new trend has started to emerge, in which games don't 'feature' physics – they're built entirely on top of it.

"We see far too much physics in games that just add that little more realism to the environment," says Havok's principle engineer Dave Gargan. "But when you add physics into the gameplay, that's when it's really exciting."

"Look at *Motorstorm 2*, for example – their foliage system is basically sets of physically simulated plants, but what that lets you do is go right through the foliage if you're in a big truck or something and potentially clear a path for people that are behind you on bikes. So, suddenly, physics becomes this tactical thing in the game, rather than just some environmental effect."

Hanging parts of your mechanic on physics doesn't just help come up with new concepts – it also makes your game easier to understand.

"There's no country borders on physics; wherever you are in the world the laws of physics are pretty much the same," says Takeyuki Ogura, chief software design engineer for Japanese middleware provider Prometech.

"So, in other words, it's totally unconnected to where the game was developed, cultural differences, or even skill as a gamer – everybody can quickly grasp the rules. It doesn't even matter if the game is unrealistic – it's still hugely important that anyone can understand the rules quickly and get into the game straight away – but if those rules are based on physics that job is much easier."

INTERACTIVE MOVING

The biggest problem when making physics a large part of a concept is enabling the player to interact with the world in an intuitive manner; in a way that gives the player a sense of physicality in the environment and a sense of immediate control over the objects in the world. "When Havok started out, physics for us meant car racing games, simply because everybody knew how to interact with a physical environment with a car," says Gargan. "It's simple – you drove into stuff and you knocked it over."

The next round introduced the concept of the player as a two-dimensional sphere – games such as *Super Monkey Ball* and *Katamari Damacy* – again because the concept of rolling is a simple one to grasp. When you try and get a step closer, though, things get more difficult.

"When you extend that to levels that have lots of dynamic objects you run into problems really quickly, because it's hard to interact with something that's got six degrees of freedom when you've only got thumbsticks to try and organise it."

Gameplay in new EA game Boom Blox is entirely hinged in block-based physics

One of the things that's helped with this problem, and has allowed for more physics-based games to flourish in three dimensions, is the Wii remote. Although it doesn't give a full six degrees of freedom, the nature of the controller makes a much more intuitive (and in some cases more accurate) interaction paradigm than traditional input devices.

> **"A new trend has emerged in which games don't 'feature' physics – they're built entirely on top of it…"**

If you've not got the benefit of the Wii remote, though, another way around the problem is to reign in an aspect of the physics to ensure that the game is still fun. "If you look at something like *LittleBigPlanet*, for example, that game is basically constrained to 2D or 2.5D," says Gargan.

"And that's what makes the game fun, because you don't end up with this frustration of, say, almost stacking two things on top of each other and then having it all fall down because it wasn't perfectly balanced."

PHYSICAL FUTURE

So where does the future of physics in games lie? Will it be through this introduction of physics to core gameplay that will see the field really reach it's maturity? "I think it still has a long way to go, and having physics integrated actually into gameplay is a step on that path," explains Gargan. What Havok is seeing demand for in the short term essentially filter to two big things – real-time destructable objects and physically-based animation.

The former, which Havok is targeting with Havok Destruction, will again allow physics to interact with the game on a core level, not destroying objects for eye candy but to open up new routes in a level or take down enemies in an efficient manner. Of course, a completely open application of this technology would open up big problems for level designers, accustomed to using static geometry to shepherd players through particular routes of a level - and so, once again, the problem becomes one of constraining that ability to ensure the integrity of the experience.

The other aspect, being addressed not only by Havok but also companies like NaturalMotion, will help increase the physical integrity of actors in the world – and this is one of the things that Gargan thinks will herald physics' maturity.

"Until I can actually interact with objects in a game with any sort of constancy that's anything close to way I interact with them in real life – well, physics' game applications haven't reached maturity. We're nowhere near that.

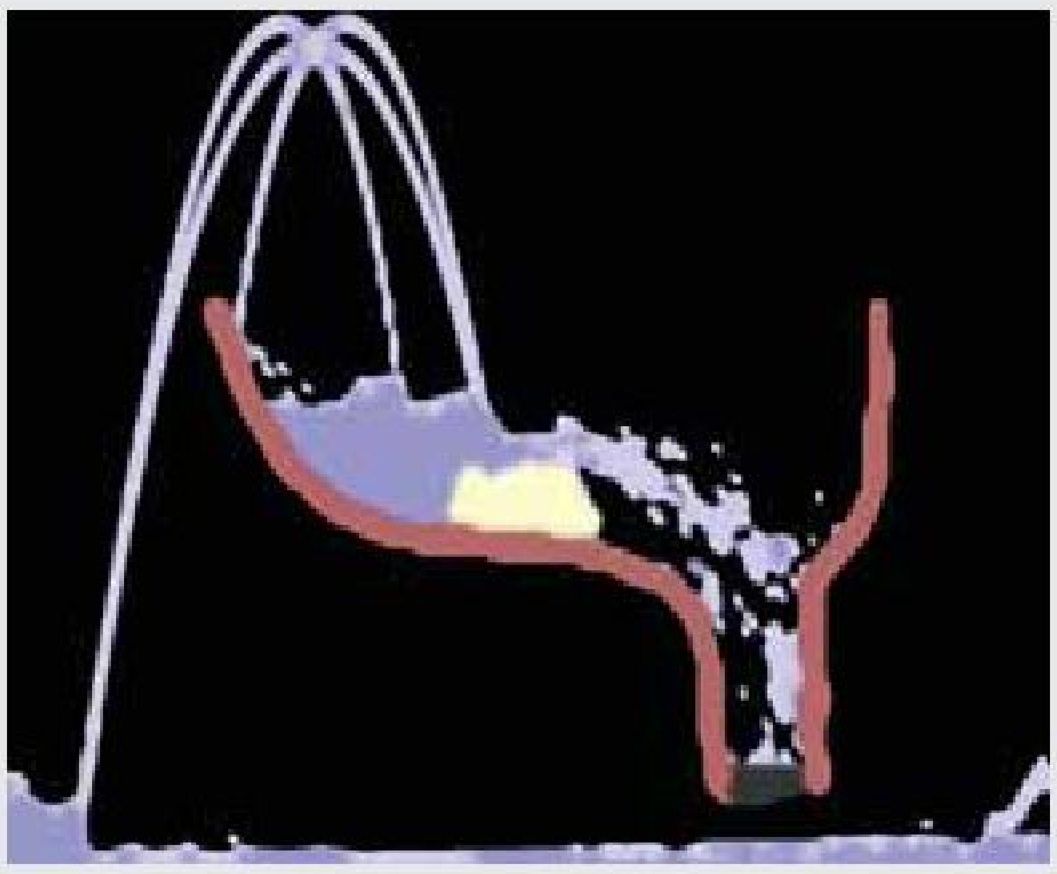
"While the rigid body simulation is basically a solved problem, I can't even lift a phone receiver and make a phone call in a game without animators actually making that possibility. So we've still got a lot of work to do, and a lot of that is on the control side."

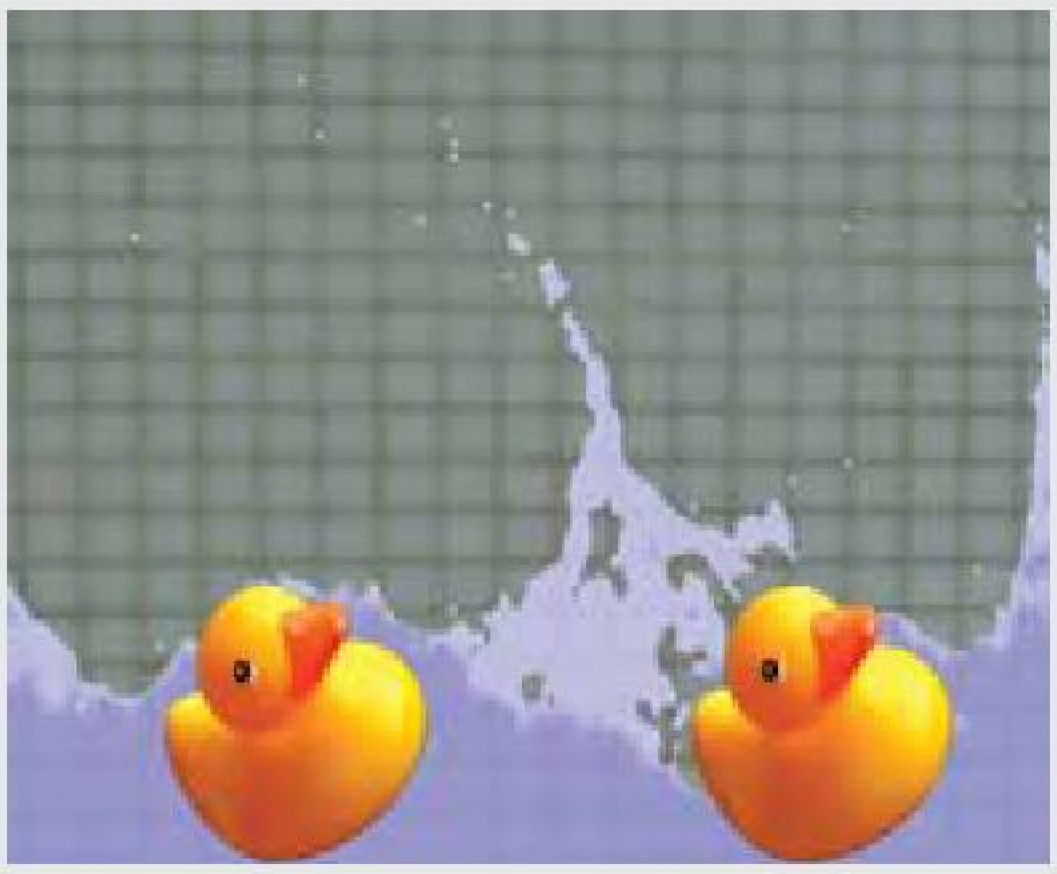
SOFT PLAY

A great example of a rapidly growing area of physics games is OE-CAKE!, a piece of software available for PC and Mac from Japanese middleware developer Prometech Software. Initially conceived as little more than a demo application to showcase its 2D soft-body physics and fluid/gas simulation middleware OctaveEngine Casual, it managed to attract a sizable audience – not of middleware purchasers, but regular gamers.

The app lets users draw and interact with objects made out of different types of matter, from normal solid rigid bodies to elastic and brittle materials, viscous fluids, powder and fuel. The result isn't really a game – although Prometech's chief software design engineer Takeyuki Ogura says "you can see that it has a hint of a game about it" – but rather an interactive physics sandbox, the opportunity to play with objects and matter that would be difficult – or, at least, messy – to do in real life.

Where it becomes a game is entirely in the hands of the user: taking subtle hints from a few of the pre-packaged scenes, and utilising the ability to save and share level files with other OE-CAKE! users, challenges soon emerge. Get the water from here to here, destroy this object using only powder, make a volcano.





The program has spread around forums and blogs, gaining a popularity – and showing creativity – that Prometech hadn't anticipated.

"Users have uploaded a huge amount of their OE-CAKE creations to YouTube," claims Ogura. "There's been a big reaction to it, and there are already a huge number of creations that we weren't expecting."

OE-CAKE! isn't the first of these physics sandbox apps to surface, of course – *LineRider* has enjoyed similar success, with over 11,000 videos shared online and over 16 million impressions to date, despite it too being an 'aimless' exercise in user-generated physics.

Havok's principle engineer Dave Gargan doesn't think that these applications are any less worthy of attention: "I think that these collaborative games like *LineRider* are where we'll see physics games grow, rather than say really heavily physics-based puzzle games."

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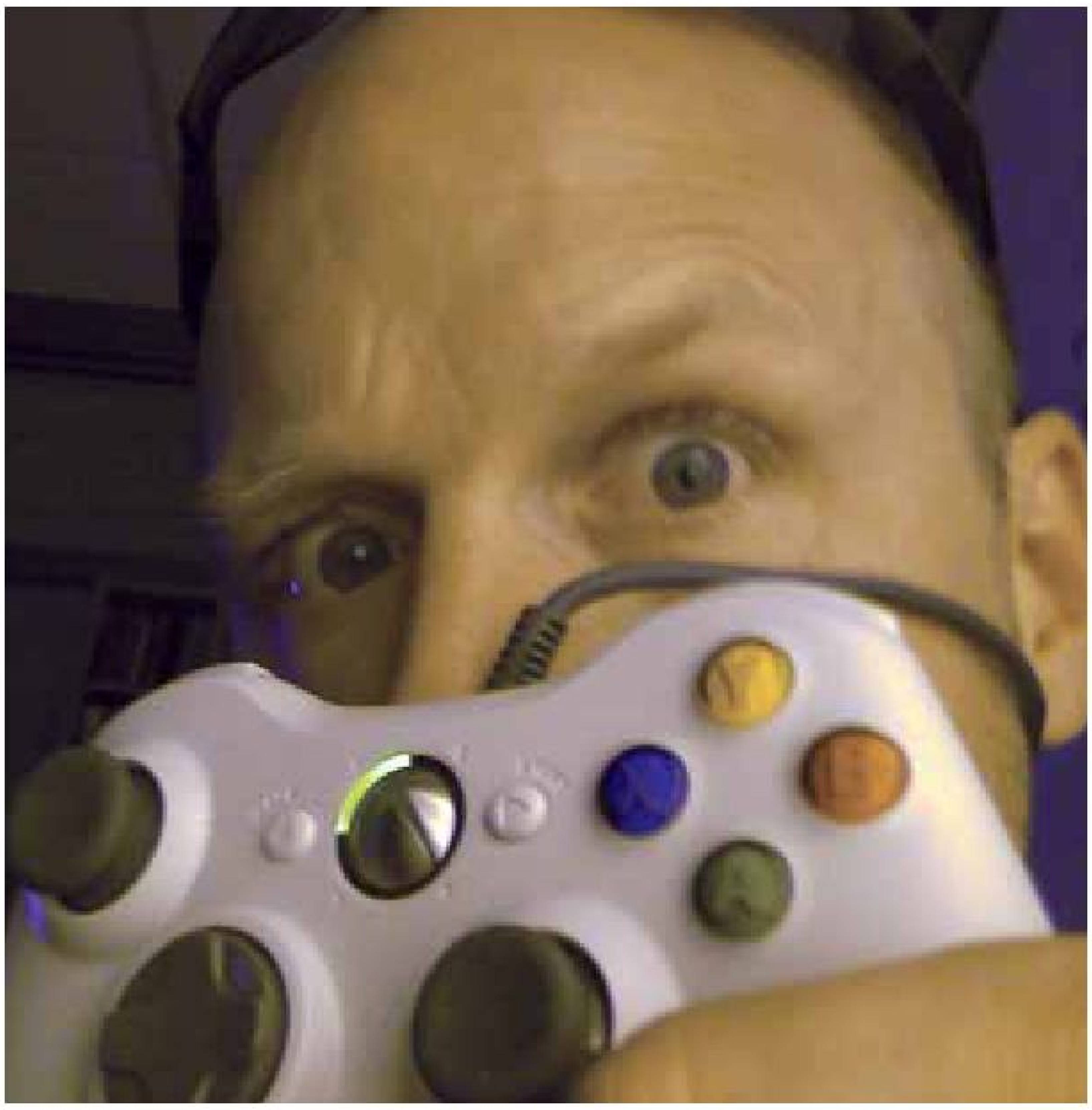
HEARDABOUT

MGS on DSP

John Broomhall discusses the evolution and of real-time digital signal processing for audio in games with Microsoft Game Studios' director of audio, **Guy Whitmore** – and gets the scoop on Microsoft's new deal with pro-audio plug-in manufacturer Wave Arts….



John Broomhall: Welcome, Guy. What does your role in MGS involve?

Guy Whitmore: My team is a resource for the entire first party portfolio of MGS games for 360/Windows. We touch dozens of titles each year. Our work can cover creative and technical consulting through to heading up and undertaking audio recording and production

JB: Presumably your aim is to make sure 360/Windows games – particularly first party games – sound awesome?

GW: That's the bottom line mandate. At first party, the goal is really to have stand-out games that sell more hardware, and also to push the envelope on quality – to be models for other upcoming titles.

JB: So you have this wide-ranging oversight of audio production across many games on platforms that have a lot of raw power for real-time digital signal processing (DSP) at run-time in games… are people are using it enough?

GW: No. With some smart budgeting you can do amazing things with high quality DSPs and I really want to push this approach. A few games have used DSP for run-time mastering, not only helping control volume levels but also achieving mastering in the true sense where you may sweeten the highs and bringing out a few lows – creating coherence. Environmental reverb has been used to good effect, but there's a lot of room for exploration. Currently most audio engines have one reverb algorithm, but what if you don't particularly like it? The future is sound designers choosing from a variety of DSP options whether in-house or externally.

JB: You mean third party plug-ins?

GW: Yes, definitely. I see a model coming forward where the same DSP manufacturers that create software for the pro-audio market start to offer their products to the game market for real-time use. These two worlds are just dying to meet each other…

JB: Interesting – do we have enough processing power to run them or do we need specially adapted 'lite' versions?

GJ: Many of these plug-ins could probably work right out of the box. However, efficiency is very important even with the power of the today's consoles, so they need optimising.

JB: But you're saying that commercial plug-in makers like Waves should be having a dialogue with the games business about producing run-time versions of their products for games?

GW: Undoubtedly, and that's my message here – they really don't have that far to go. It may not be that hard to optimise them and convert into workable formats for games.

JB: So how can real-time DSP techniques really take us forward in game audio?

GW: I believe it's the only way we're going to really stand out next to any movie in terms of sheer sound creativity. In a non-linear medium the only way that audio can really be immersed with game-play and visuals I think is with real-time DSP. Short of that we can just sort of lay sound on top – there's a potential disconnect.

JB: What about the business end for these third party plug-in companies?

GW: Well licensing has happened in the past – e.g. Bungie and the Waves plug-ins. It worked well for them in the context of *Halo 3*, but the crucial next step I saw was to license a set of plug-ins we could easily use across our entire portfolio. We're currently finalizing a multi-DSP, multi-license deal with Wave Arts (www.wavearts.com) who are converting some of their existing pro-audio DSPs and formatting them to work on the 360 and PC in the XAPO format (part of the XAudio2 specification). The great thing is that one deal like this allows a small company to do the initial legwork to make their products game-friendly. And then they're free to license to other developers and publishers.

> **"With some smart budgeting you can do amazing things with DSPs…"**
>
> ***Guy Whitmore, Microsoft***

JB: So for all of us in cross-platform development, we need to see the audio middleware guys leading the way here?

GW: Exactly. Think of a future with great third party cross-platform engines where you download the demo version and lo and behold, there are also demo versions of all these cool DSP plug-ins.

JB: It makes sense to me and would ultimately lead to better game audio. Do you think there's any hope for a holy grail of unified plug-in format eventually?

GW: Like anyone I would love it because it would make life for all of us easier – maybe we can do what the pro-audio DAW world couldn't… I guess that has to be the ideal. For now, though, we're drawing together all the best DSP from MGS games and looking to make it available as a centralised resource accessible through my group. But of course if someone is developing cross-platform and they're interested in the plug-ins from Wave Arts, there's nothing to stop a direct approach. Imagine if every major studio/publisher inspired a third party company to create DSP for their platform who could then license it to anyone – before you know it we would have a viable ecosystem of middleware DSP. It would make doing audio for games that much more vibrant.

JB: So do you see a future where an external mixing engineer – say a film guy – could sit down with pro-audio friendly interfaces and software access available not only to alter volume levels but also all the DSP plug-ins. So for instance he can get under the hood and change a compressor setting?

GW: Absolutely. We need a complete flexibility for DSP in mixing games and we are moving in this direction – every game we take it one step further formalising the mixing process borrowing somewhat from Hollywood but also creating our own rules for our non-linear medium. We do a lot of production in-house but we also work out-of-house with experienced movie guys like Scott Gershin at Soundelux. More and more, I'm scheduling time at the end of games where we sit down for at least a couple of weeks in the mix studio with game and devkit changing settings as we walk the various scenes. That process is crucial – and DSP is a vital part of it - for instance changing reverbs. You're making thousands of decisions in the course of an hour of mixing because you can iterate so quickly. I think in the future we'll have a role of 'Game Mixer' and I think it will be very important going forward.

JB: As for dynamic mixing – presumably we also want to get funky with fader moves and DSP behaviours (in response to game variables we're polling) for purely creative, moment-enhancing, subjective-effect reasons?

GW: Yes – I think most dynamic mix decisions would be based on emotional subjective things rather than realism. For me, mixing for games is way too stuck in a literal distance-based approach – everything getting quieter the further away it is, regardless of how important it is. We need a re-think and again, to me, DSP is a very important component, particularly when you're getting into 'I want this section to feel dreamy the second time' or 'I want the player to suddenly feel the sadness of the character's feeling'. The same emotional choices a movie sound designer might make but in a non-linear context…

JB: Pretty exciting prospect…

GW: It really is.

READ THE FULL INTERVIEW ONLINE AT WWW.DEVELOPMAG.COM

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www.johnbroomhall.co.uk

Win cash and prizes in the $1,000,000 Intel make something Unreal contest

EPIC HAS LAUNCHED THE $1 Million Intel Make Something Unreal Contest, which rewards *Unreal Tournament 3* mod-makers with cash, computer hardware prizes, the opportunity to show off their work, and even a shot at winning an Unreal Engine 3 license.

The contest consists of four preliminary phases – each with its own categories, judging and prizes – and culminates with a grand final selection of the best mod overall. The contest runs through the end of next year, so there is plenty of time to create lots of content.

Epic will accept mod entries for Phase 1 until June 27th, 2008. Phase 2 will close on October 17th, 2008, Phase 3 on May 15th, 2009, and Phase 4 on August 21st, 2009. The date of the grand final judging will be announced at a later date.

Now that we have begun taking mods, it's time to explain what we are looking for in Phase 1, as well as what can be won in each category.

Prizing for all Phase 1 categories will be awarded as follows – 1st Place: $2,500; 2nd Place: $2,000; 3rd Place: $1,500; 4th Place: $1,000; and 5th Place: $500.

The 'Best Mutator' category is available only in Phase 1. Here, we are looking for changes to a *Unreal Tournament 3* game type.

'Best New Weapon' simply recognizes the top new instruments of destruction. Mod-makers who do not enter a new weapon in Phase 1 may be interested in Phase 3's 'Best Weapon Set' category.

The 'Best New Game Type' category is also exclusive to Phase 1, and focuses on gameplay. New game types may use new levels and original content, or use existing *Unreal Tournament 3* levels and content. In addition to $2,500, the first place 'Best New Game Type' winner will also receive a high-performance Skulltrail PC, featuring dual Intel Core 2 Extreme quad-core processors.

The 'Best Tool' category, only available in Phase 1, rewards *Unreal Tournament 3* tools and utilities. Tools can be external, like an UnrealScript development environment, an .ini manager or an application that adds functionality within *UT3*.

'Best New Character' and 'Best New Customization Pack' rewards new *Unreal Tournament 3* character models as well as accessories, i.e. collections of helmets, facemasks, shoulder pads and other character customization options. The first place winner of this category will win cash, and also receive a high-performance Skulltrail PC with dual Intel Core 2 Extreme quad-core processors. This category is also open in Phases 2 and 3.

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'Best Capture the Flag Level' rewards CTF game type levels that mix great gameplay with strong visuals and excellent performance. Original or existing *Unreal Tournament 3* content can be used here. In addition to winning cash, the first place CTF winner will also score a high-performance Skulltrail PC with dual Intel Core 2 Extreme quad-core processors. We will continue to accept CTF level mods through Phases 2 and 3.

The 'Best Warfare Level' category has the same requirements as 'Best CTF Level', except this applies to the Warfare game type. Warfare mods can also be submitted in Phases 2 and 3.

'Best Vehicle Capture the Flag Level' rewards a balance of great gameplay, visuals and performance. Original or new *Unreal Tournament 3* content is welcome. First place will net cash, plus a high-performance Skulltrail PC with dual Intel Core 2 Extreme quad-core processors. We will accept vCTF level mods in Phases 2 and 3 as well.

The 'Best Deathmatch Level' category rewards a balance of great gameplay, visuals and performance in a deathmatch level. The first place winner will receive cash in addition to a high-performance Skulltrail PC with dual Intel Core 2 Extreme quad-core processors. We will also accept deathmatch mods in Phases 2 and 3.

The 'Best Use of Physics' category rewards the most interesting uses of physics within *Unreal Tournament 3*'s gameplay. The physics category will run through all four preliminary phases, so there will be plenty of opportunities to submit mods of this type.

We invite everyone in the community to participate, whether it's by making mods, rating entries or just trying them out. Mod developers, it's time to show off your creativity and Make Something Unreal!

For more information on the contest, check out **www.makesomethingunreal.com**

> ***"We invite everyone in the community to participate, whether it's by making mods, rating entries or just trying them out..."***

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June 10th to 11th, 2008

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Microsoft Gamefest
Seattle, WA
July 22nd to 23rd, 2008

Casual Connect
Seattle, WA
July 24th, 2008

GC Developers Conference
Leipzig, Germany
August 18-20, 2008

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Mark Rein *is vice president of Epic Games based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Since 1992 Mark has worked on Epic's licensing and publishing deals, business development, public relations, academic relations, marketing and business operations.*

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"In the Eye of the Blizzard: a Keynote Q&A with Rob Pardo"
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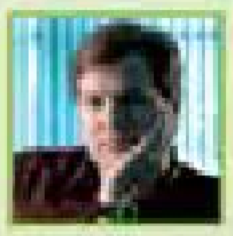

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Character Building

In the second half of his tutorial on character design (part one was printed last month and can also be found at developmag.com) Axis' **Graham McKenna** talks through topology, UV modelling, mirroring and more…

TOPOLOGY

Topology should actually be considered when building your primitive shells. It's how the mesh flows in an optimal fashion. It's a challenging stage and one that can eat up a lot of time. For example: when you build the bicep, how does that connect with the forearm and the shoulder, in terms of points and polygons?

A Holy Grail of mine is to try and keep the mesh in quad polygons but more often than not the necessity to insert a tri-poly connecting key areas is inevitable. I find it best to leave the joint areas of the character as quads although I have found that a well-placed tri-poly on a three-way joint can work well in certain situations.

Figure 1 shows an example of the creature's wrist and how it was stitched together. Note how there are more points on the edge loop of the hand compared to that of the forearm. I have still managed to keep the band of the wrist as quads, merely changing the shape of the quad to suit the stitching.

MIRROR MODELLING

Why take time doing left and right when you can concentrate on one side and let the computer aid in the other, in essence that's mirror modelling. Although we now have the ability to mirror our modelling as we build point by point I generally work on one half and then use a mirror function at stages to check the overall form.

Once I'm happy with one half I mirror stitch to create the overall form and then continue using a mirror modelling function to work on finer details of the mesh.

Using this process we can get a perfectly symmetrical mesh whilst only doing the work to half the mesh. Asymmetry, which is one of our nuances and often (if not always) seen in characters, can be introduced as a last stage – mirror modelling allows us to get to this stage quicker.

THE 'SETUP' POSE AND CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS

This is usually my last stage in the modelling process and quite an important one when working in production. If you are to look forward the next stage in the pipeline will be rigging so the animators can start breathing some life into your character.

Get talking to the rigger, find out his/her needs. This can be as simple as splitting your geometry into particular layers or posing the character in a certain way that suits a skeletal structure or adding another edge loop to aid in a better deformation.

Communicating with the rigger will ascertain what's required for the next stage and more importantly for the modeller will eliminate having to do this further down the line once you've moved onto something else.

< CODING >

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UV CREATION

Truth is I find this quite a tedious stage, but one that dictates care and attention.

There can be a lot dependent on your UV map and it's best to think ahead for its uses further down the line.

For example if we know the modelling process will be furthered by sculpting this will dictate no overlapping UVs. If I know this isn't a requirement and know the texturing can be mirrored I may opt to overlay UVs to cut down the painting process.

My preference would always be to try and layout the UVs with no overlaps. However if I feel a UV map can over lay itself to cut down my time further in the process I will opt for this route (*Figure 2*). I try not to do things for the sake of it.

Whatever approach you take I find the biggest consideration is picturing your three dimensional shape in a two dimensional form. I usually think about where the most inconspicuous places I would want my texture seams.

A crude example of this is if I were laying out UVs for a foot I would opt for the seam to be on the bottom of the foot, the area that's usually less in view.

Another aspect I like to check about my UV map is undesirable stretching across the topology.

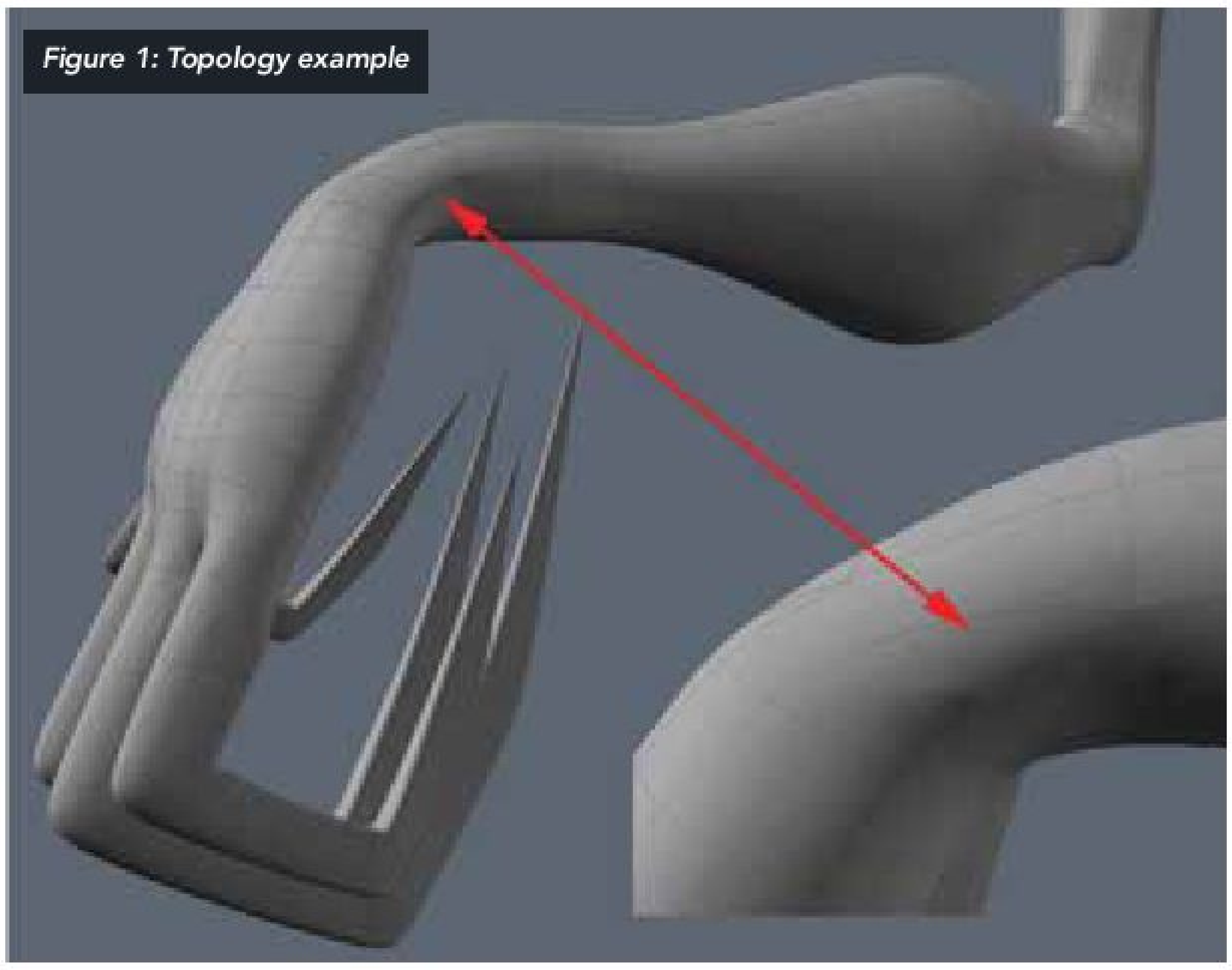

Figure 1: Topology example

Generally the tools available today unwrap and lay with a minimum of stretching but I find the more you may have to manipulate the UV points by hand that stretching can occur. The best approach I find for checking whether this is happening is to actually apply a texture to the geometry in the form of a numeric grid to indicate portions of the mesh in isolation as it relates to the geometry.

TEXTURING AND SHADING

Texturing and shading are also areas that will dictate your approach dependant on the job at hand. An example is if I were looking to create a photo real model I'll try and collect as much photographic material as possible. If the project is not photorealistic I'll perhaps see if there's any thing of use in the concept material even if it's just for a template.

In the case of the creature I've used for the article I pretty much took the concepts and constructed the bulk of my texture. This allowed me to get the exact line art as per the concept without spending too much time.

3D mesh painting software is also very useful in certain situations. Besides many advantages I particularly like there ability to allow you to place paint exactly where you need it, eliminating the process of going between 3D and paint packages.

As well as your texturing you also need to consider the shading properties of your surface and how it should 'feel' to the viewer.

Consider what components make up the surface. Is it a hard surface with high gloss highlights or a soft surface with low gloss sheen? Is it transparent? Is it reflective? By analysing the surface to this degree allows you to breakdown what you actually need to do.

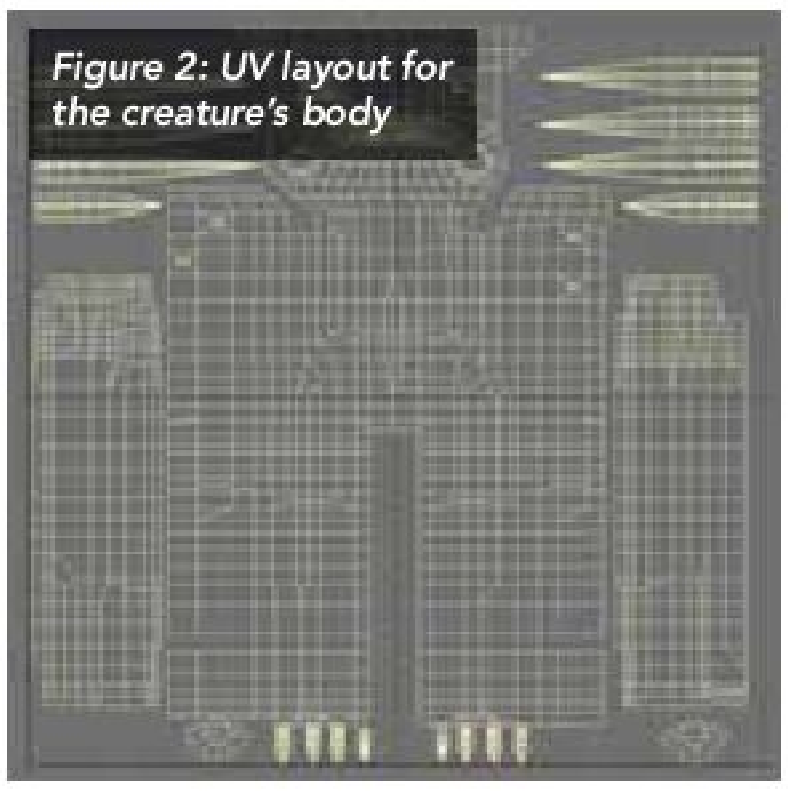

Figure 2: UV layout for the creature's body

ADVANCEMENTS IN TOOLS

In time some of the steps above will become easier as tools available to the artist advance. Advancements create new challenges as the old ones become easier, with some enhancing your work and allowing you to do operations that were unachievable in the past.

Sculpting tools are one such advancement, giving the modeller the ability to add that extra level of detail which is sometimes a necessity rather than a luxury.

Regardless of the advancements, the best advice I can give is 'Don't be afraid of them, embrace them!'

***Graham McKenna** is one of the co-founders of Axis Animation, and has experience in games, commercials and broadcast projects both as director, artist and supervisor.*

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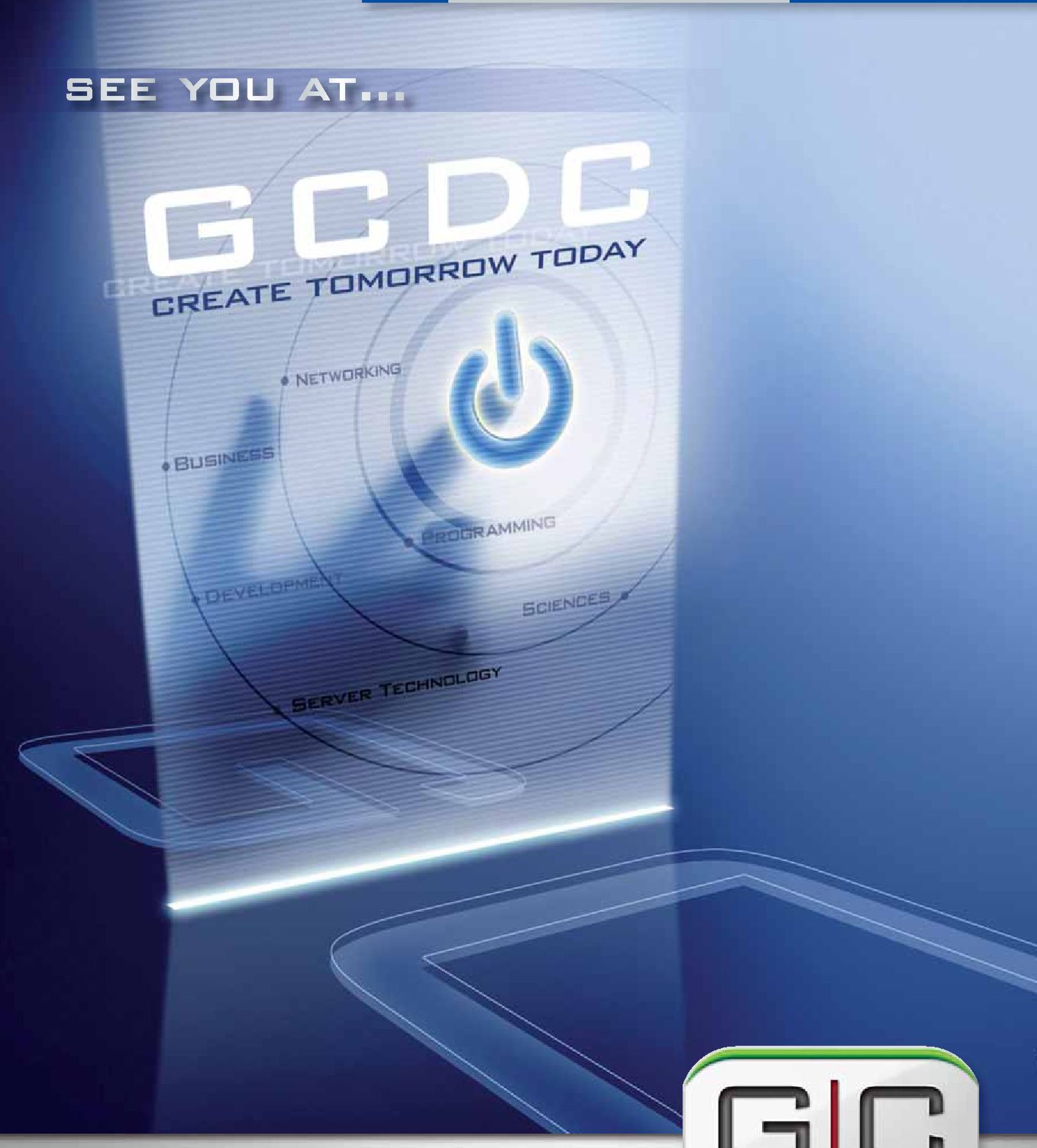
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Studio News

This month: Gusto gears up and Red Badlam grows…

Gusto's Derby studio has this month welcomed eight fresh-faced recruits into its fold, continuing expansion as its first project gears up.

First up is programmer Tom Papados (*far left*), who joins the studio after a four-and-a-half year stint at nearby Free Radical Design where he most recently focused on game engine work.

Next up is Max Fanning (*second from left*), who joins Gusto as a character artist. His most recent tenure was a three-year stint at Rebellion Derby, where he worked on *Shellshock 2* and other titles.

Ezra Allen (*third from left*) enters the company as an artist, having most recently worked as a modeller and senior animator at Brighton-based party funsters Zoe Mode, while Andy Catlender (*fourth from left*) hops aboard the Gusto train as a senior programmer, having got off the Rebellion Derby bus just after *The Simpsons Game* stop.

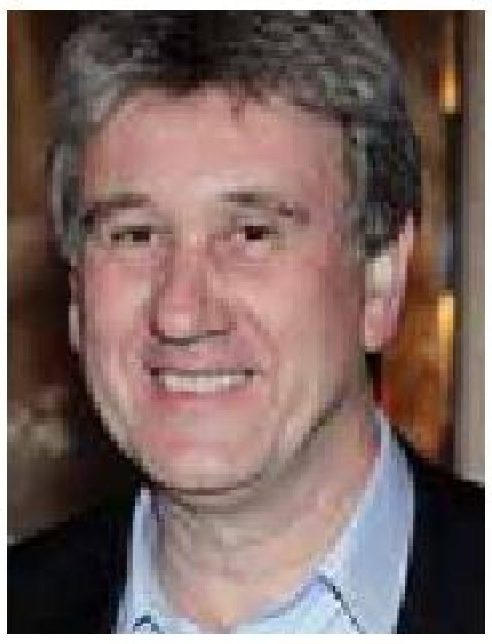
Nick Ruddock (*fourth from right*) takes his first dip in the games industry pool after spending his education at University of Teeside, while Doug Holmes (*third from right*) joins the company from Monumental Games.

Dave Reed (*second from right*) joins the company as a programmer and is another recruit from Rebellion Derby where he'd been responsible for rendering code, and before that worked at Codemasters on the *Colin McRae* series.

Last but not least is Dan Haslop, a graduate of the University of Lincoln's BSc (Hons) games computing programme, who brings with him three years experience of freelance graphic design work to his role as junior artist.

Taking stock of the bumper crop of new talent, Gusto Games development director Steve Archer said: "The development of the studio's first project is going extremely well; we are all very pleased with how it's progressing. The addition of the new staff will ensure that the game will meet everyone's expectations when it's released at the end of the year."

www.gustogames.com



Fred Hasson, founder and former CEO of UK developer trade body Tiga, has joined virtual world company RedBedlam as executive director.

RedBedlam was established in 2001 and develops virtual world and virtual economic technologies. It launched its first title *Roma Victor*, a MMORPG set in Roman-occupied Britannia, in 2006.

"I am absolutely delighted to be joining RedBedlam," said Hasson. "It's not often that you encounter such a talented and devoted group of individuals with real skills, a knack for innovation and an in-depth understanding of virtual world development. I believe strongly that virtual worlds are an exciting new medium with a great deal of untapped potential.

"RedBedlam's proposition is a particularly rare combination of real world experience and some extremely specialist know-how, which has a profoundly strong commercial potential – particularly in today's marketplace," he commented.

Kerry Fraser-Robinson, president and managing director of RedBedlam, added: "Fred brings an immense amount of practical experience, skills, knowledge and indeed contacts within a diverse and broad range of media sectors."

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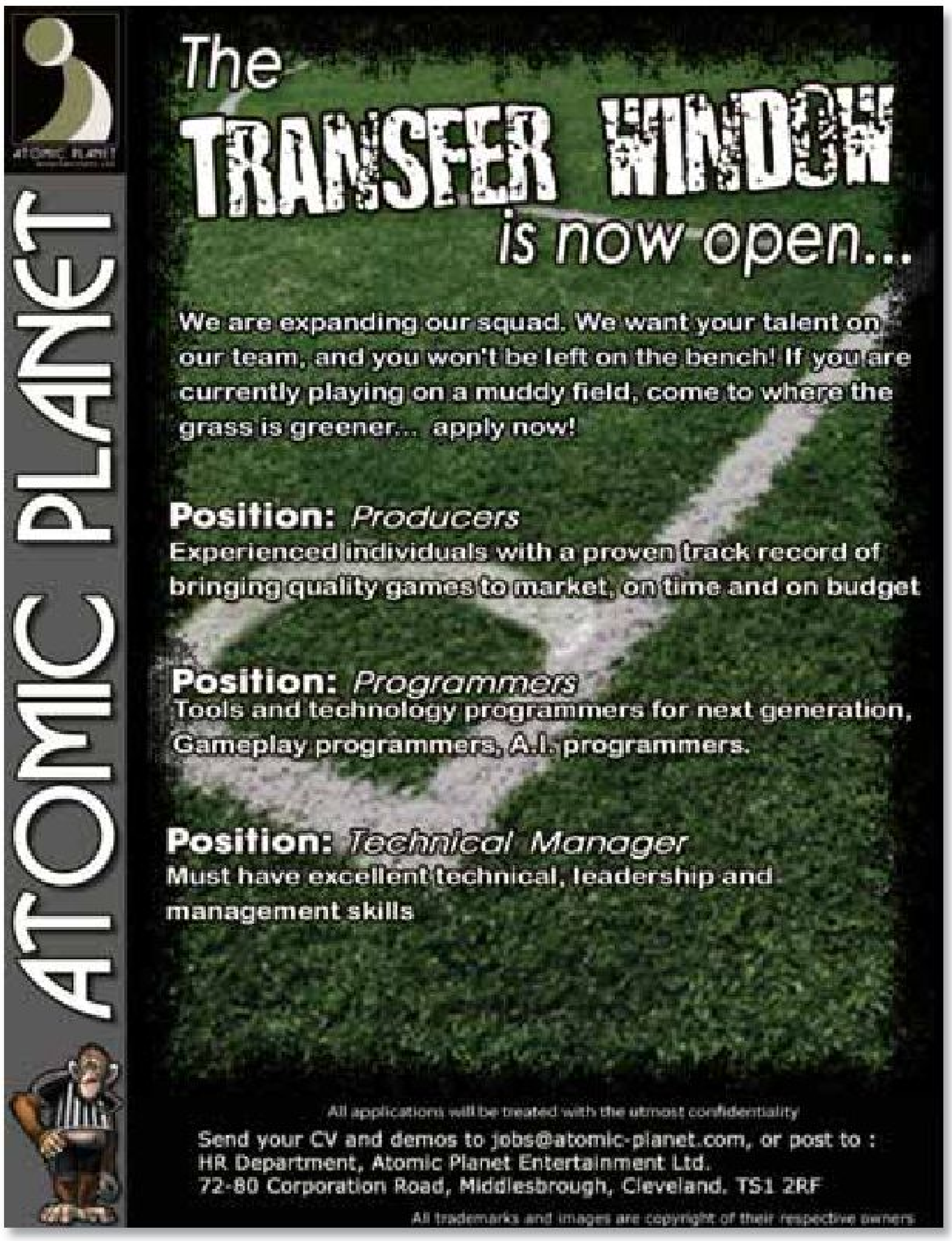

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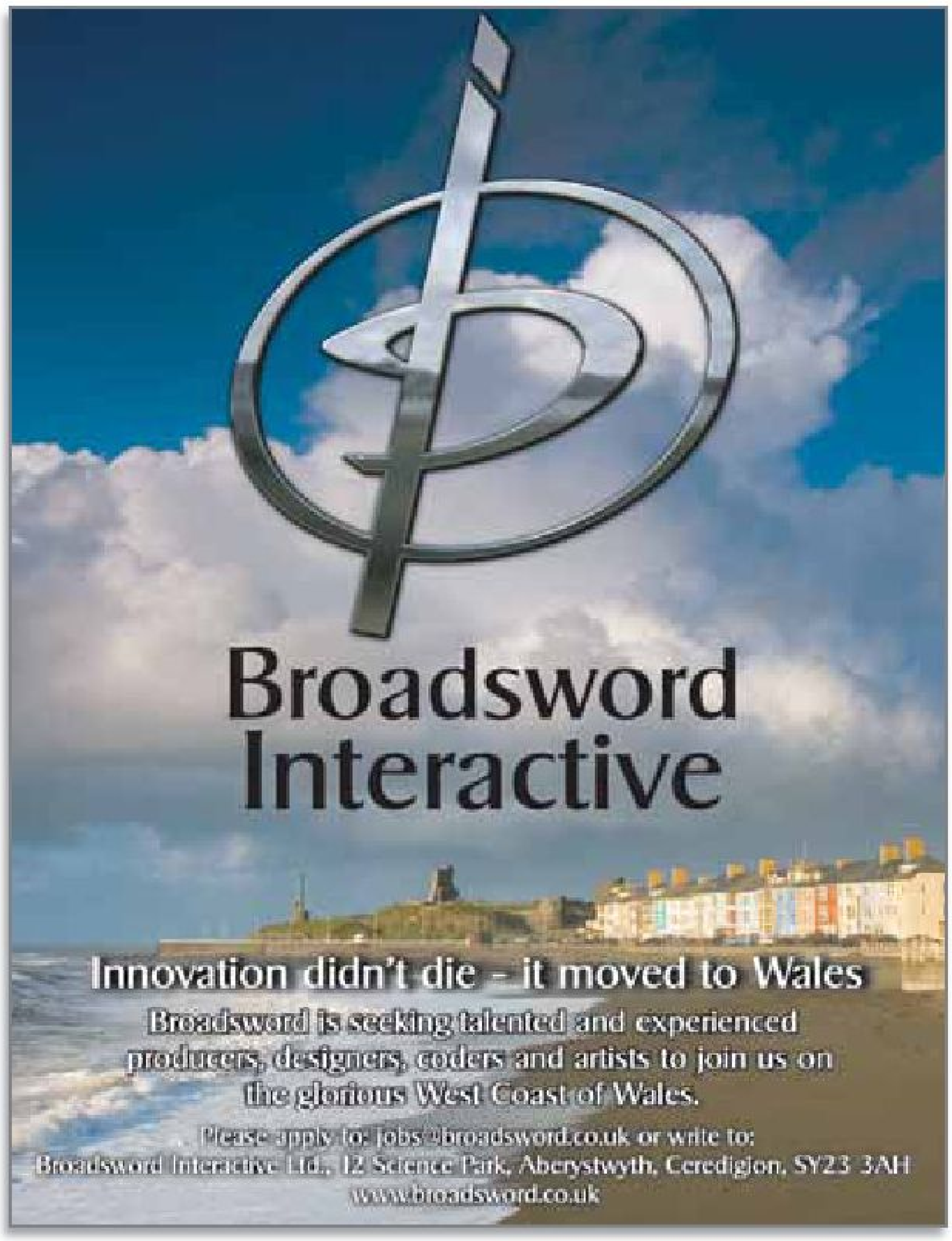

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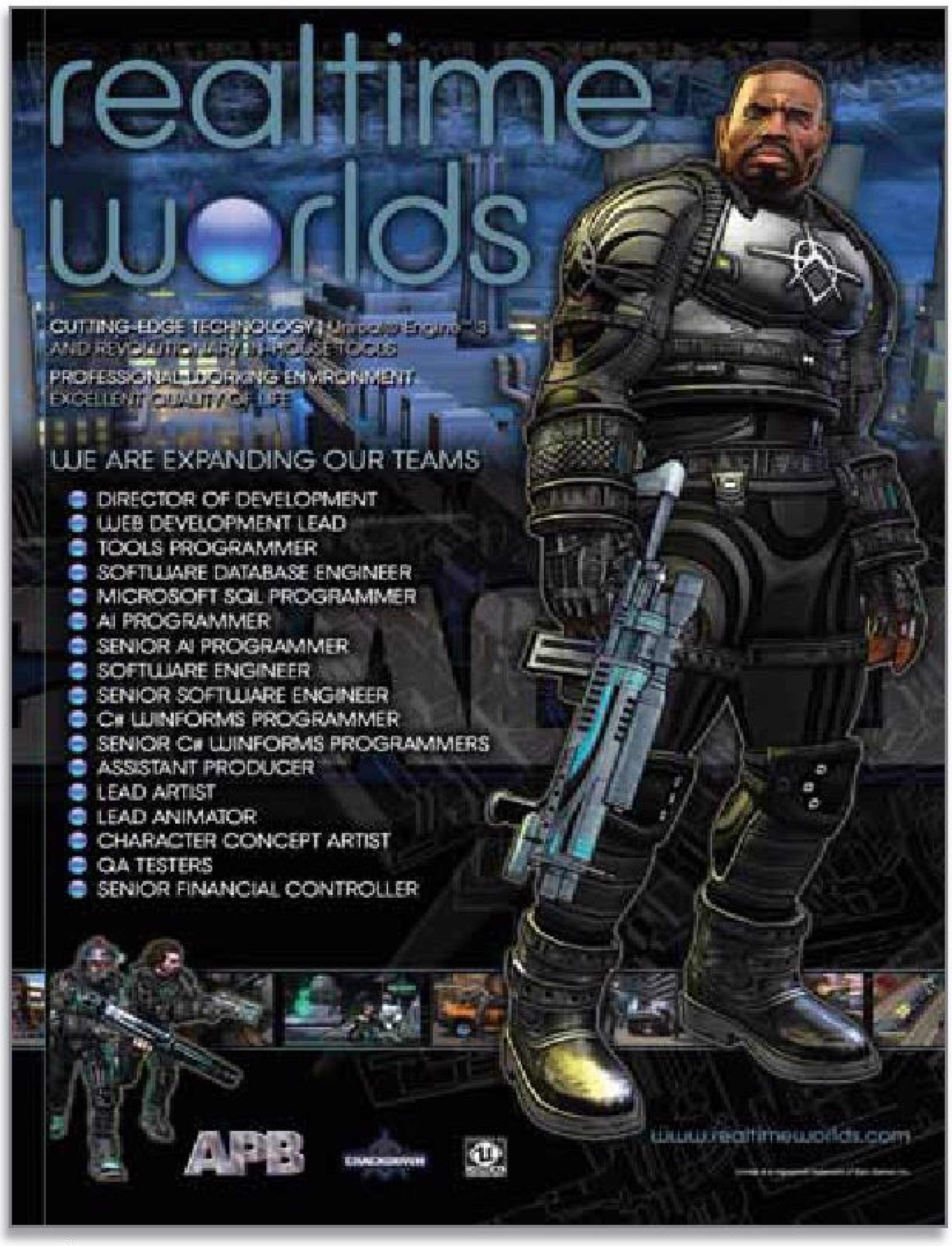

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Tools News

Anark out of the game

Anark Corporation, developer of the Gameface UI software, has sold off its entertainment software division, including Gameface, and will instead focus on targeting CAD and visualisation customers.

The entertainment software division has existed since 2002, and has served customers as large as Microsoft, Sony and Nvidia with its 'powerful 3D tools and middleware platforms'. Instead, the company will now focus on its Anark Core application that converts and prepares CAD data to improve interoperability between different CAD packages.

Develop contacted Anark to ascertain who had bought the division, but was told that such information was 'still confidential' at this time. Anark's website, however, contains a image displaying the words 'Looking for Anark Gameface?' that links to an Nvidia e-mail address. Anark had not responded to *Develop*'s attempt to confirm this information as we went to press.

www.anark.com

AUTODESK BUYS REALVIZ

Autodesk has confirmed another company acquisition – this time swooping for Realviz and its image-based content creation software.

Founded in 1998 and also HQ'd in France, Realviz provides technology that creates 3D assets from 2D stills which can then be used for panoramic photography, image-based modelling, match moving and optical motion capture. Realviz boasts clients from the games industry and beyond, including EA, Activision, NASA, Daimler Chrysler, Sony Pictures Imageworks and Warner Brothers Animation.

"Realviz's technology is complementary to Autodesk's modelling, visual effects and animation products. It will enable us to increase the use of 3D technology across many industries, including architecture, film, broadcast and game development."

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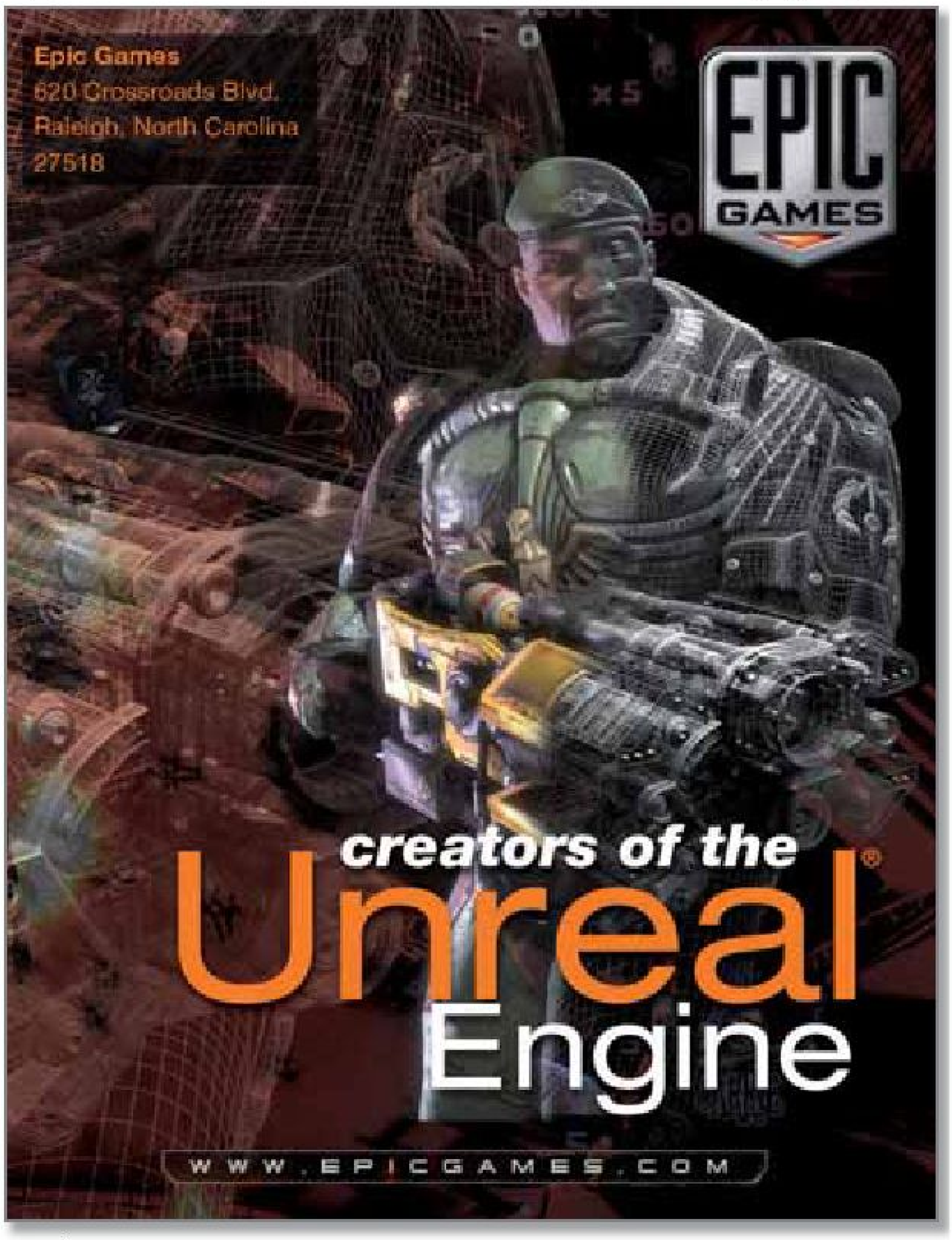

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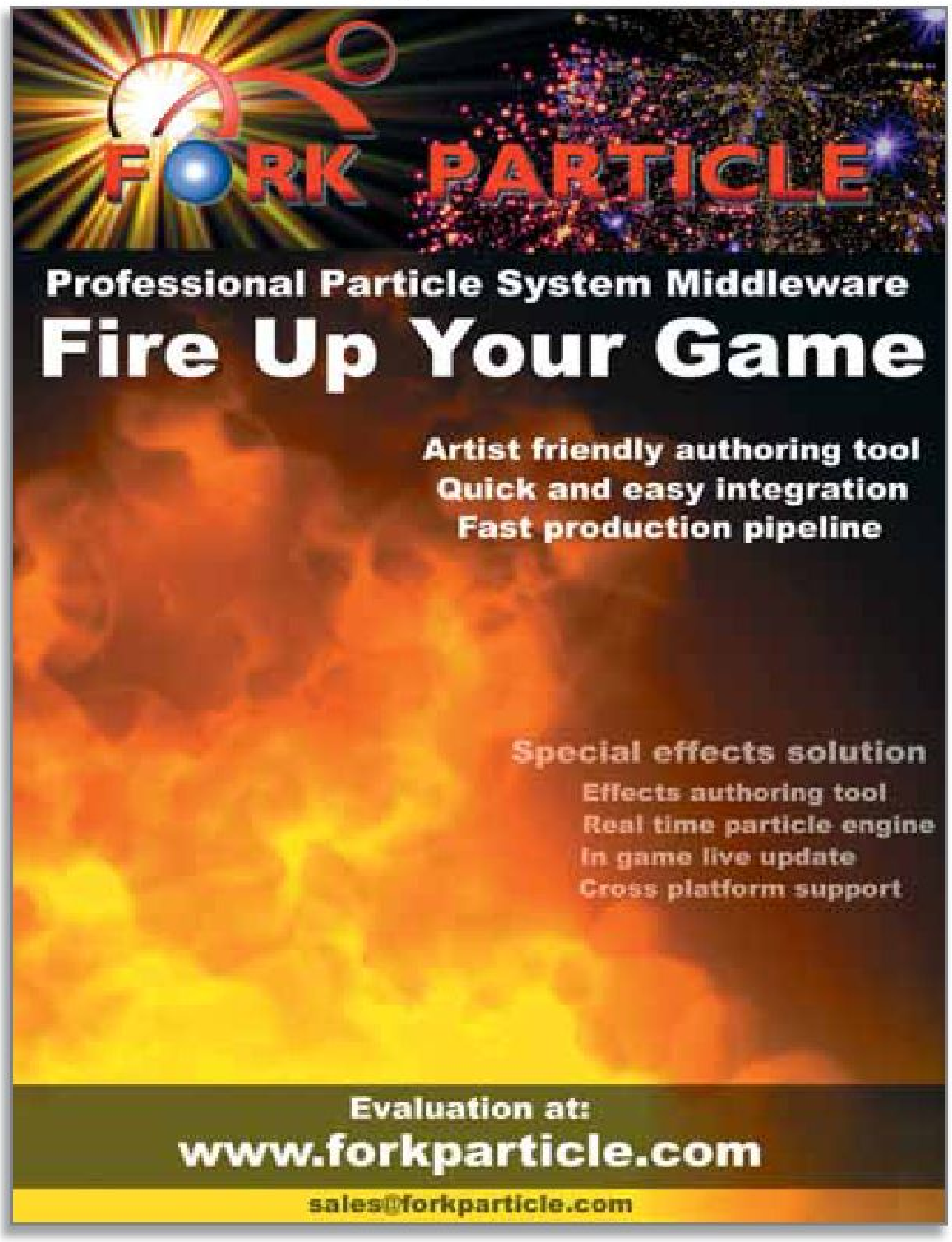

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Tool Spotlight

VENUS BLUE

VENUS Blue is a load testing tool that can be used to stress-test massively multiplayer online games by simulating not only network connections but the actual behaviour of players. By integrating the SDK into your game – a process that apparently takes two to three days – VENUS Blue can be shown actions that players can take and can therefore mimic behaviour such as fighting monsters and group communication to accurately gauge performance in different emulated network conditions. Though it won't eliminate the need for a public stress test phase, it can detect problematic areas of server performance much earlier in the testing process and therefore hopefully reduce any last minute surprises.

Currently the only way to use the tool is by working with Testronic Labs, who have the exclusive licence for Europe, North America and Japan.

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Services News

Testronic gets new game sales exec

Game QA specialist Testronic has welcomed Tulay Tetiker to the firm, who joins as new games sales executive. Tetiker will be responsible for driving sales in games QA and localisation, helping Testronic in its quest to become 'the go-to point' for game testing worldwide.

David Hooker, senior VP of sales and marketing for Testronic Labs, said: "Tulay is an invaluable addition to our sales team. She combines exceptional multinational games expertise with excellent communication and management skills, all of which are required to ensure that new projects get off to the best possible start. We are continuing to grow our games testing at an exceptionally fast rate and Tulay will help maintain the momentum."

"Joining Testronic Labs is a fantastic opportunity to be part of a global player in the field of quality assurance," said Tetiker. "I am looking forward to working with some of the biggest names in the industry and to share our services as the perfect choice for our clients."

www.testroniclabs.com

ANIMAZOO LAUNCHES NEW MOCAP SYSTEM

animazoo
the future of motion capture

Brighton-based mocap company Animazoo has launched a new product, the IGS-190H, which combines their powerful IGS-190M system with a new Ultrasonic system, ExacTrax, and the Animazoo Jump Injector, a suite of patent-pending editing and auto cleaning tools. The company claims that the Jump Injector can perform 80 per cent of post-processing and cleaning in a point and click environment.

The new system has recently been tested in a shoot of capoeira performers, something that's notoriously difficult to mocap because of the high speed motion in the air during jumps. It was the first time an inertial gyroscopic system had been used to capture capoeira, and resulted in 200 moves and 1,500 in-game shots captured in just two days.

"The IGS-190H is the next generation for motion capture," said Ali Kord, founder and Chief Technology Officer of Animazoo.

"Users will notice the step change in the quality of their data, even in challenging scenarios such as fast-paced action or movement off the ground. Not only is the data more accurate, it is also more lifelike, we've added extra sensors as well as our most advanced software yet."

www.animazoo.com

SPECIALMOVE APPOINTS NEW PROGRAMMING EXECUTIVE

Games industry recruitment consultant Specialmove has itself recruited New Zealander Grant Mark (*pictured*) as its recruitment executive for programming. Previously a programmer himself, Mark has been involved in the development of internap proprietary technology, tools and pipelines on multiple consoles and for a PC casual downloadable game framework. His most recent title was *Speed Racer* on the Wii, and has also worked on *Jackass* for the PSP and PlayStation 2.

Also moving up the ladder is Matthew Hill, who has been promoted to head of recruitment at the Glasgow-based agency. He joined in 2006, after ten years within the industry, and has already secured big accounts such as Sega, THQ and Gamestation in his short time at the company.

Andy Campbell, Specialmove's chief executive officer, commented: "Specialmove was established in 2005 to offer the highest level of recruitment services available on the market. Our aim was to deliver quality candidates who match the exact needs of our clients. We do this by using our industry experience and investing time in gaining greater insight into the clients business and by not falling into the bad habits of other recruiters. I am delighted that our approach has been so successful and the business has continued to grow. The assembled team at Specialmove now has 40 years combined experience of actually working within developers, publishers and retailers. This gives us a unique position in the marketplace which we are set to continue to expand upon."

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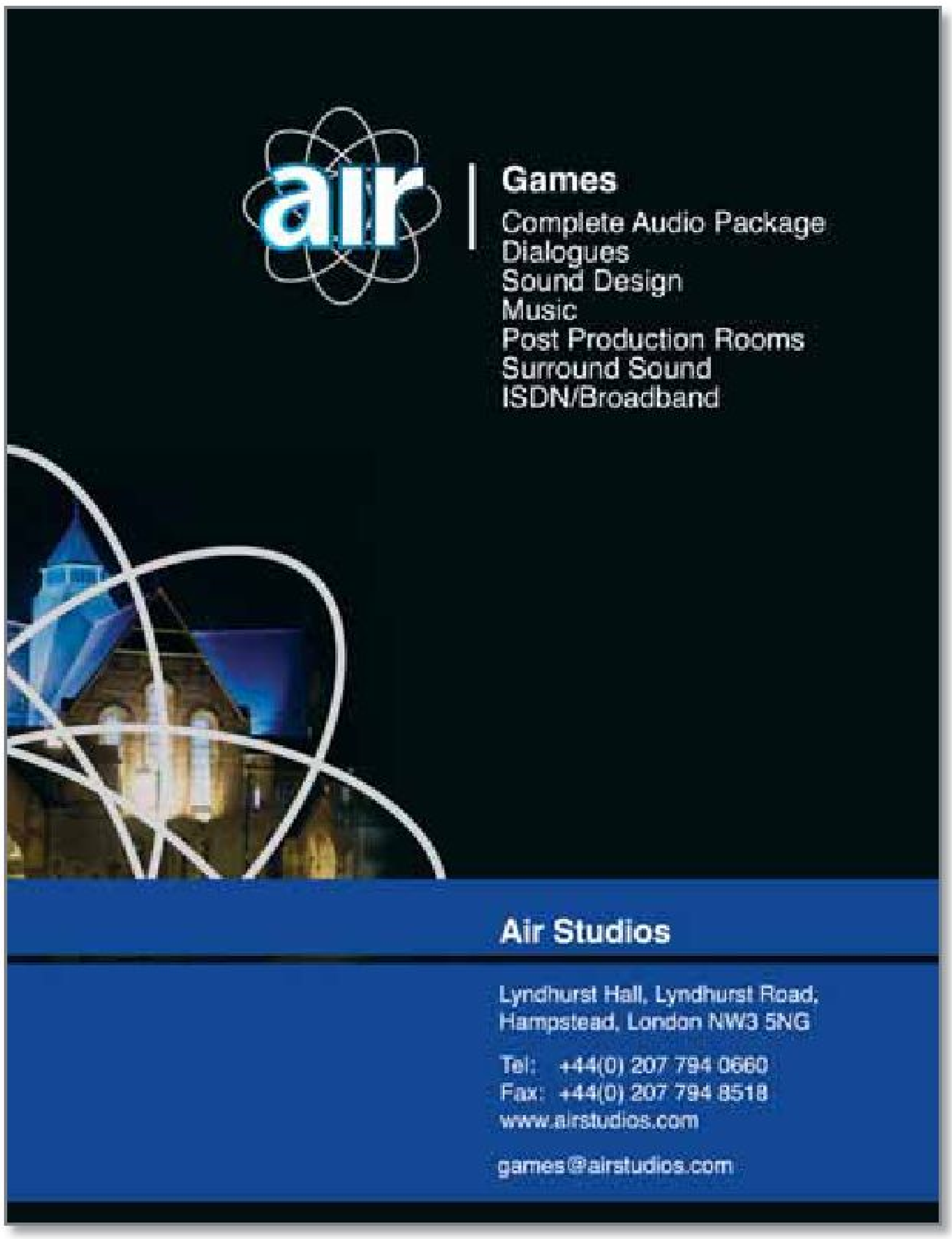

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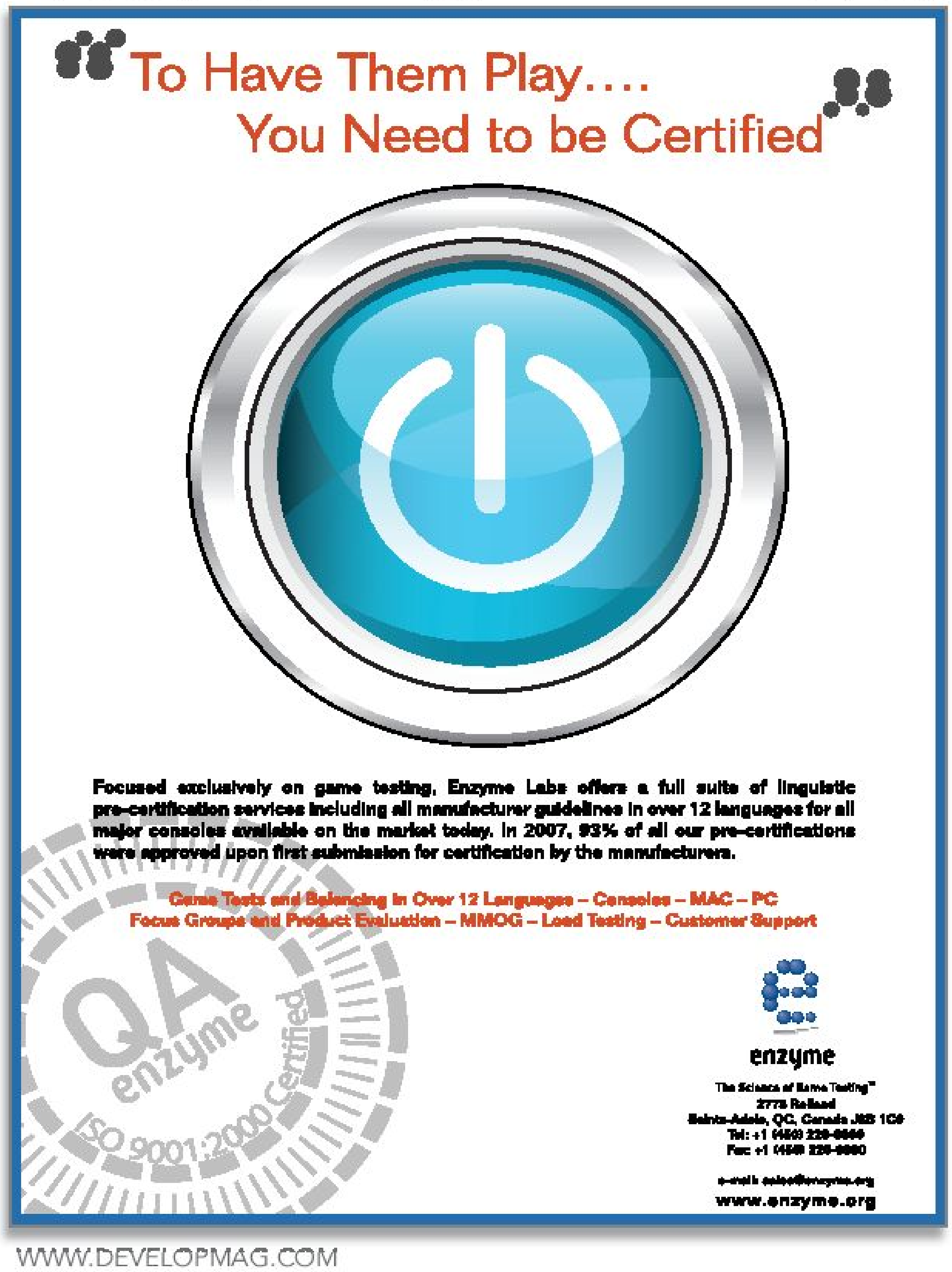

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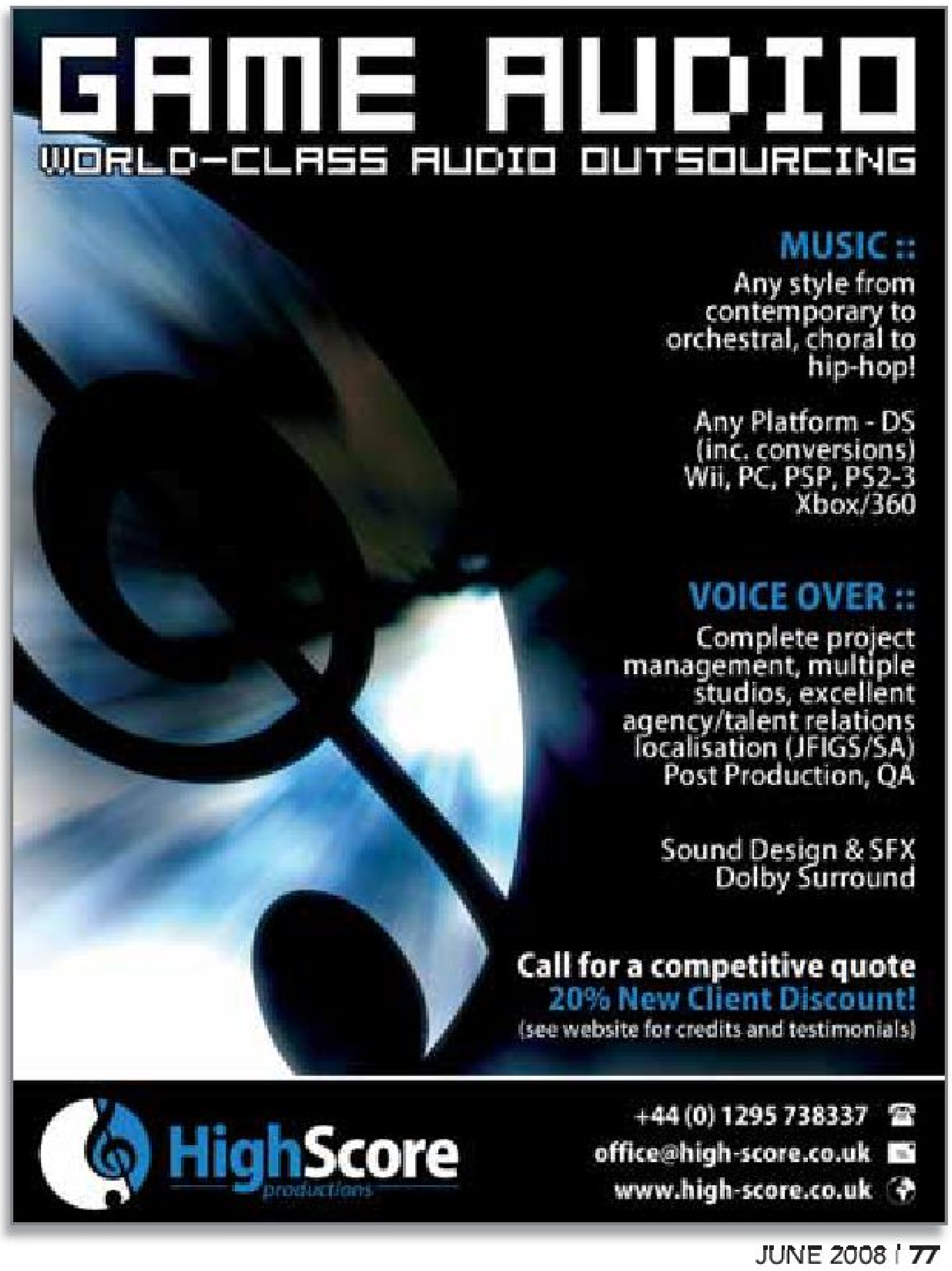

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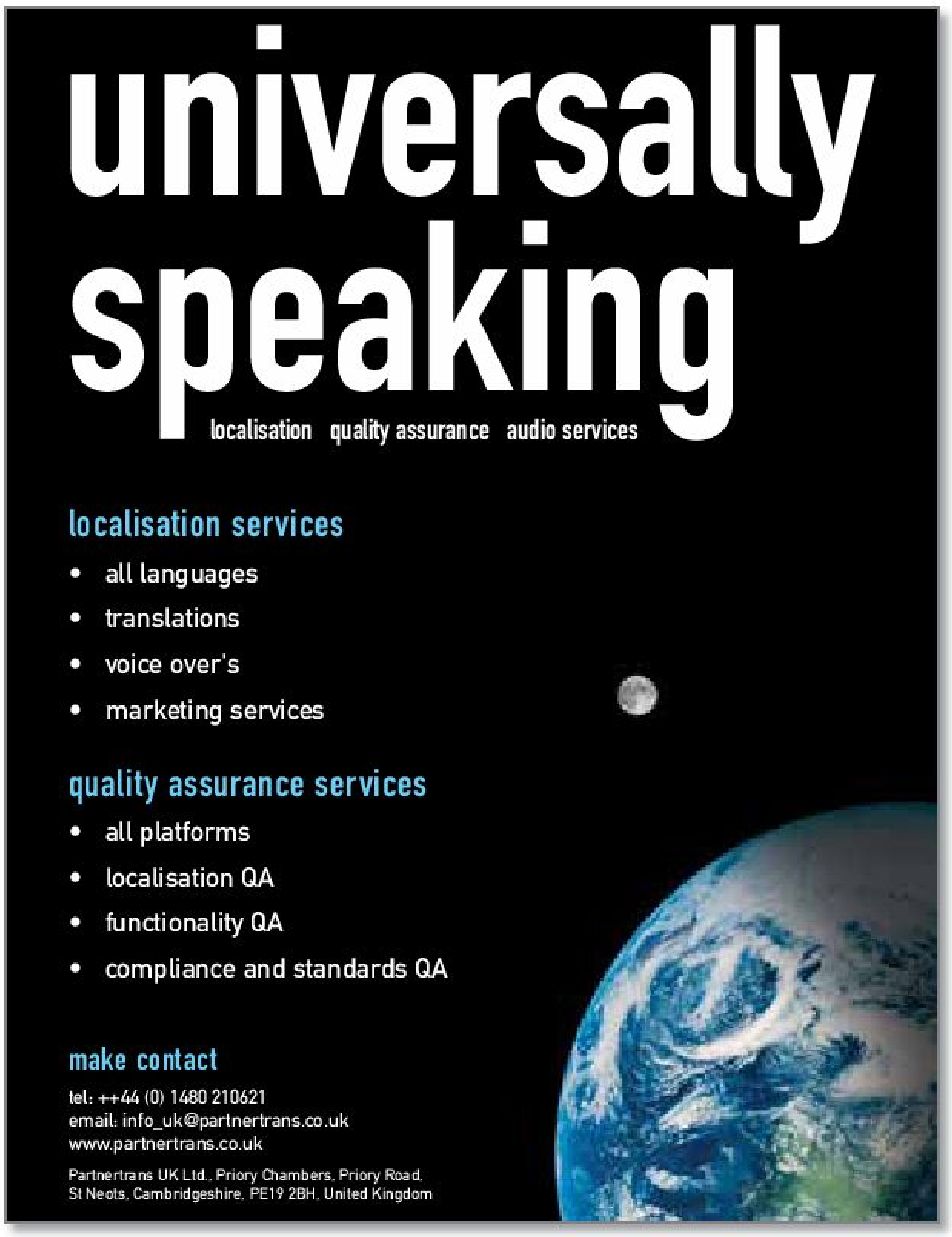

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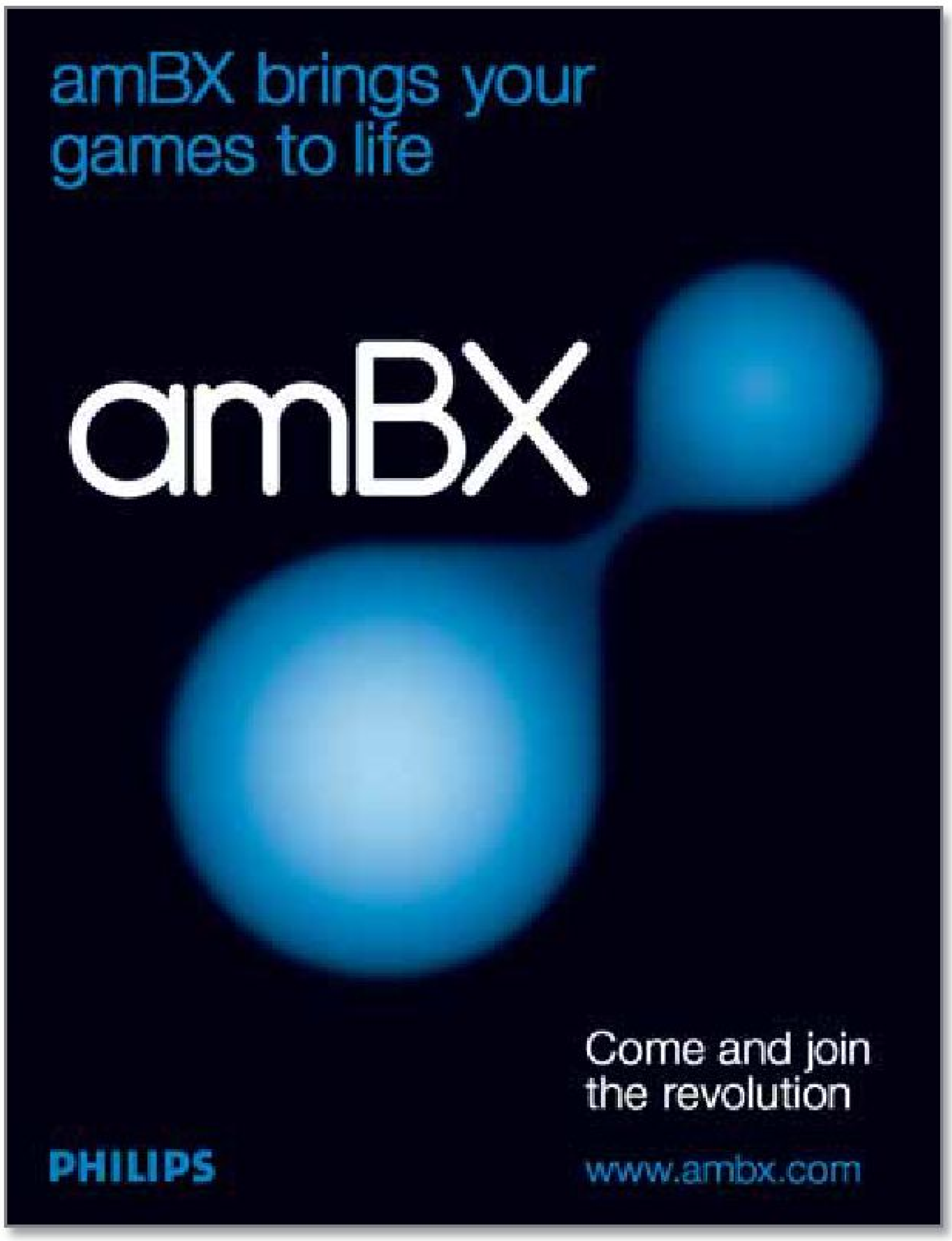

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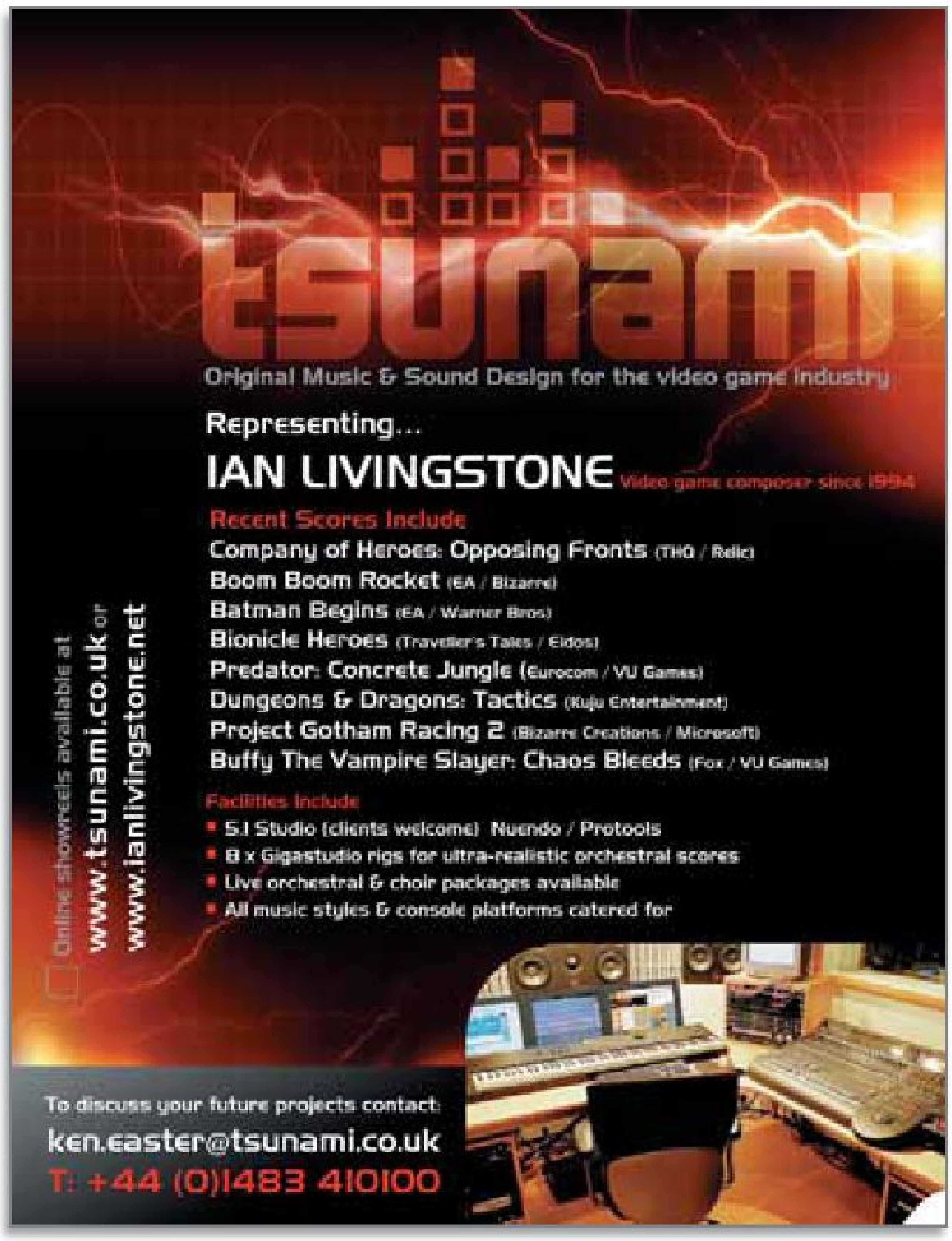
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Recent work: Recently completed trailers for *Pure* for Disney Interactive Studios, *Race Driver: GRID* for Codemasters, *Crysis* for Electronic Arts, *Turning Point: Fall of Liberty* for Codemasters and *Colin McRae: DIRT* for Codemasters.

Currently Working On: Trailers for three triple-A PS3 and 360 titles that unfortunately cannot be discussed.

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Training News

Huddersfield student sees potential

A final-year student on the University of Huddersfield's Computer Games Programming course has developed an XNA-based game for the blind.

22 year-old Craig Burgess (*pictured*) made the game after considering the impact that disabilities have to interacting with games, and picked blindness because games are a massively visual medium.

The game uses pitch and volume of sounds to portray oncoming enemies in a game resembling Atari classic *Tempest*, and also features graphics to aid partially-sighted players.

"My hopes for the game are really quite big – I think over the last couple of months it has moved from being my dissertation project to thinking about how it could be implemented into the mainstream gaming community," said Burgess.

"One of the ideas we had was to use an iPod as a means of playing it. So I'm not really sure what the future holds, but I'd certainly like to see it being played by a lot more people."

Duke Gledhill, senior lecturer in Informatics at Huddersfield's School of Computing and Engineering, said: "I think just the fact that Craig is approaching this subject matter is unique. There is an online forum for blind gamers, but nobody really concentrates on making comprehensive games that can actually rely on audio alone. I look forward to seeing how the game will develop in the future."

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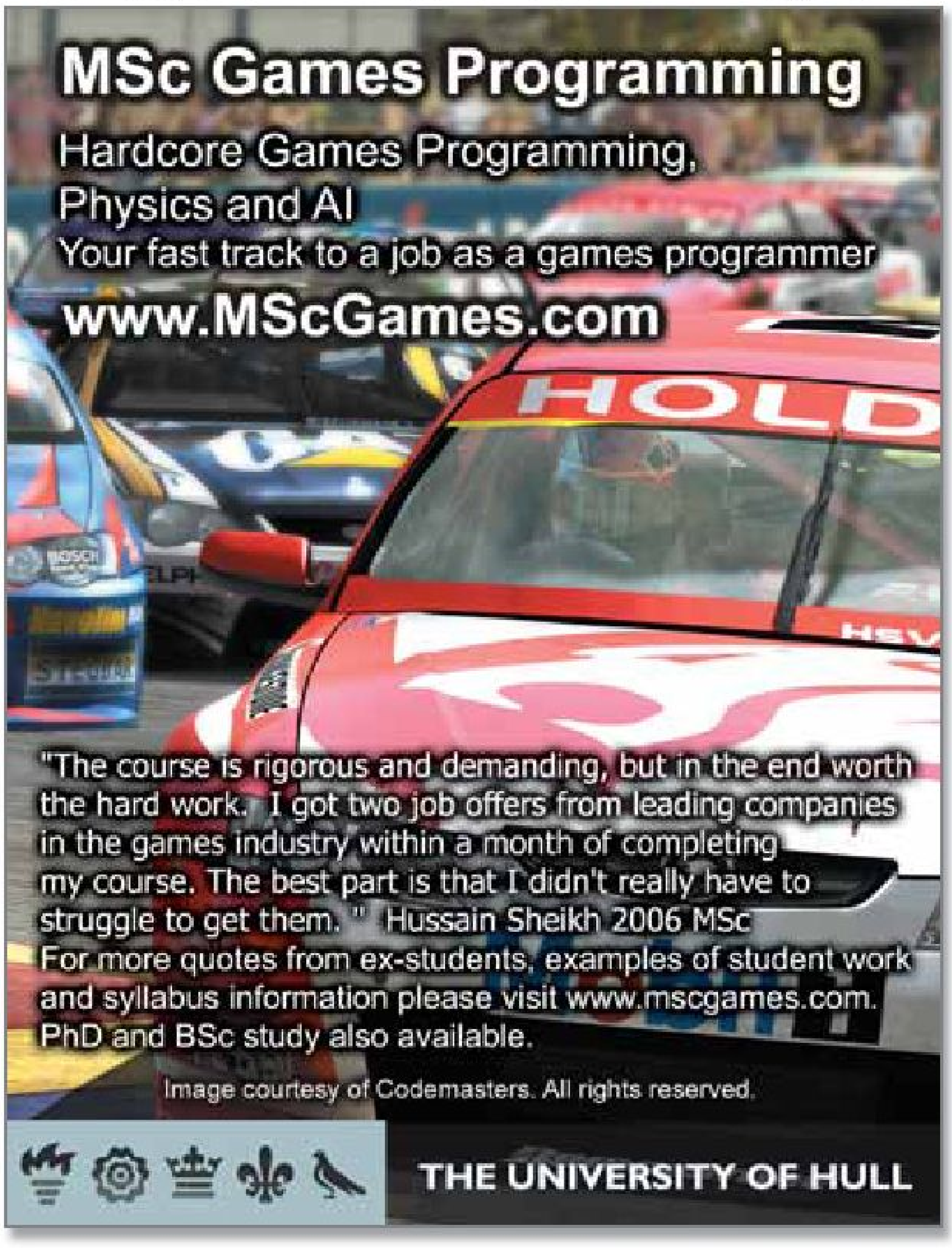

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THE BYRONIC MAN

Simon Byron is having second thoughts about online gaming…

On paper, it seemed easy enough. Microsoft had three Muse tracks available for *Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock*, for which they wanted 500 of my "points".

According to the current intergalactic exchange rate, 500 "points" would cost me 4.25 "pounds" – which makes Xbox currency roughly worth that of a Liberian Dollar. But, hey, I didn't mind what sort of money they were after. I had £4.25 burning a £4.25-shaped hole in my pocket, and I really, really, really wanted to play the three Muse tracks in *Guitar Hero*. Simple as that.

Well, not quite.

Some time last year, I decided that I wasn't going to renew my Xbox Live Gold subscription. For me, it had become the equivalent of paying a gym membership as karma for leading a sedentary lifestyle. So in a rare moment of clarity, it dawned on me that paying 35 quid a year for a few outings of *GRAW2* with my chums probably wasn't the best value for money. I could have bought the same game twice for that. Which, of course, in buying the sequel, I'd already done. LOL.

So like the naughty boy I am, I let my Gold subscription lapse, assuming that I'd simply get knocked down to the Silver level without any fuss. Because that'd be the simple way, right?

Be thankful I've not written about the ball-achingly tedious Xbox processes which have meant I've been cursed with a 360 gamertag of "byronicmanuk". But to add insult to injury, the one moment this year "byronicmanuk" really wanted to go online and give Microsoft more money, was the one moment he wasn't allowed. The 360 would do the fancy whooshes and plonks, then sit there in silence, engine idling on the dashboard. No error message, nothing.

> ***"In a rare moment of clarity it dawned on me that paying 35 quid a year to play a few online games probably wasn't value for money…"***

After giving it a few more goes, I stumbled across an error message. It was from Bill Gates telling me my account had been "suspended".

Such insolence! Report to me! Write 100 lines saying: *GTA IV* on Xbox is the most superior version of the game because it promises extra downloadable content we paid millions of dollars for when truth is no-one will ever finish the original game anyway.

Frustration rising – being able to play Stockholm Syndrome in *Guitar Hero* has been a dream since the original game – I opted to recover my gamertag. This'll be a cinch, after all Microsoft definitely want my money, right?

All I had to do was input my "Microsoft Passport". Microsoft Passport, Microsoft Passport. Like the rest of the world, I was forced into signing up for a Hotmail address when I got my 360, presumably because Microsoft thought once I'd seen its meagre storage limits, awkward interface and intrusive adverts that cover the screen with video if you even think about rolling the mouse over them, I'd be a Hot Male for life. I wasn't, obviously. I'd quickly forgotten the details. The details Microsoft wanted, in order for me to recover a gamertag I didn't like, simply so I could pay them some more money. So imagine typing over a dozen guessed combinations of email address and password, using only a 360 game pad. If only I had to imagine – I was doing it, boasting all the speed of a spastic typing with a finger taped to his forehead. And with each attempt, I grew more and more angry.

Did you know that livid is the name of the colour people turn when they're livid? Well by the time I stumbled across the correct combination of email and password I was literally bright livid.

But still, I was in. And only a few more seconds from being able to give Microsoft some more money. That was all I wanted to do. That's all. That's. All. But no. After the false hope of loading pause I was dealt a knockout blow. "Your Passport is not linked with your Gamertag."

I thought: Fuck off. Seriously. Fuck the fucking fuck off, you absolute insufferable fucking fuckwads.

Micro transactions are supposedly the way forward for the industry. Extracting a small amount of money from suckers – sorry "consumers" – every now and again could mean the difference between profit and loss, bonus or sacking. It should be easy, transparent. Not borderline impossible.

Anyway, I solved it by doing something I should have done originally. So insultingly, I'm now also byronicmanuk2. Don't bother adding me.

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